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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CHILDREN AND REANEY'S DRAMATURGY

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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For my mother

"the loving arm that never failed
to throw protection around
and provide for all of us in the
darkest day of our need"

- *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three)

Abstract

Dramaturgy is essentially everything - the technical elements of set design, theatre philosophy, and writing, rehearsal and productional methods combined with such literary concerns as theme, characterization and style - which go into creating a play as distinct from a poem, novel or short story. And, in James Reaney's case, it is a dramaturgy profoundly influenced on all levels by children.

Where the archetypal Child representing the human soul and its experience with the hostile, material world outside it, forms a constant theme throughout Reaney's poems and plays, the dramatic form containing this vision has been in a constant state of change and evolvement - a change and evolvement stemming largely from Reaney's intensive work for and with actual children between 1963 and 1974.

Reaney's first attempts to move his child-centred vision from the page to the stage prior to 1963 were hampered by his use of a static set and a linear plotline that often did not allow the audience or even the actors to recognize themselves as being in a child's imaginative world of play and metaphorically perceived realities.

With the advent of Reaney's intensive experimentation with puppetry, children's theatre and creative drama-like

workshops in the sixties, however, came an explosion of important developments including (1) the rapid development of a fluid, visually and aurally evocative "play" style which both dispensed with the physical limitations posed by the linear plotline and static set, and helped the audience's and actors' minds adjust to the correct emotional, associative focus of the imaginative child and (2) a growing interest on Reaney's part in applying his Child-centred myth to real life through improvisatory workshops designed to guide people back to the child-within and, through that a fresh and redemptive way of viewing themselves and their world.

From *The Donnellys* and the children's workshops closely associated with them came in turn (1) a refinement and sophistication of the various lines of children's drama experimentation into a distinctive "play" style (2) the finding and training of a company of actors willing to approach this style in the proper spirit of child-like energy and play and (3) a stronger demand on the audience, as psychic children, to enter strongly into the real world of their own cultural past and construct their own life-sustaining myths out of its elements.

Finally, in the plays of the late seventies, Reaney appears to be moving towards a comprehensive concept of theatre, building on his successful experiments with a style, company of actors, and series of workshops all

based on the child-like powers of play, myth and metaphor; a theatre where actors, playwright and the members of the community itself come together like psychic children to play or "dream out" a redemptive vision of themselves as a society from the common elements of their culture and history.

In short, from Reaney's work and experimentation with children have evolved not only many radical changes in dramatic style and structure, but a different method of playwriting and rehearsal, and, in the final analysis, a new philosophy of what theatre itself should be. From almost all aspects of the dramatic process then - vision, writing, rehearsal and production - Reaney's drama has and continues to be directly and indirectly influenced by his work for, with and about children.

Preface

In explaining the purpose and method of this thesis, it is perhaps wisest to start at the beginning of it, that is, with the title itself: "Children and Reaney's Dramaturgy."

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines dramaturgy as being "the art or technique of writing drama," or, alternatively, "the technical devices that are used in writing drama and that tend to distinguish it from other literary forms." It is, in short, everything - the technical aspects of set design, theatre philosophy and writing, rehearsal and productional methods interacting with the literary elements of theme, characterization and style - that goes into creating a play as distinct from a poem, novel or short story. And this thesis is, in turn, concerned with the question of Reaney's particular dramaturgy as distinct from that of other playwrights.

In evaluating the influence of children on Reaney's dramaturgy, this thesis again makes use of the Webster's Dictionary to supply not one but two relevant definitions of the word "child".

The first definition refers to the child as being "a young person of either sex esp. between infancy and

youth." For many child drama specialists such as Peter Slade, this effectively means young human beings up to the age of fifteen or sixteen years. And while, in some contexts this may be seen as extending the upward limits of childhood unreasonably high, it must be remembered that some of Reaney's own self-described "plays for children", such as *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match* seem geared to a junior high or even early high school level of maturity. Thus, it seems safe to assume that Reaney's own working definition of a child, like Slade's extends from toddlers to young people in their mid-teens. Further, when one speaks of the influence that this latter group of people have had upon Reaney's dramaturgy, it must be remembered that this influence is generally meant in two senses: the direct influence deriving from Reaney's intensive work with and observation of actual children and their activities, and the indirect influence present in certain dramaturgical techniques or methods first experimented with by Reaney in his written work for young audiences.

The second relevant definition defines a child as "one who exhibits the characteristics of a very young person", or in the context of Reaney's work, a person, young or old, who retains the child's characteristic openness to myth, metaphor and the powers of the creative imagination. Moreover, since Reaney regards this child-like

ability to transform the inanimate and material into a thing of human spirit and meaning as being the truest manifestation of the human soul, the child and its relationship to the world about it also becomes in Reaney's work a continuing and vital symbol of the human soul struggling with a life and world often hostile to the human spirit.

Thus, in speaking of children in connection with Reaney's dramaturgy, one is actually referring to several kinds of children who, taken altogether have had a profound effect on Reaney's developing theatre: the actual children Reaney has worked with and written for, the psychic child existing within the man and the archetypal Child representing the human soul and experience.

Having explained the title of the thesis, it is only fair perhaps to add a few notes on the general methods and modes of analysis in the main body of it. Because the most immediate and readily available sources are Reaney's plays themselves, the main emphasis of this thesis is on textual analysis, with particular regard being paid to evolving elements of style and structure. At the same time, extensive use of critical articles, interviews, letters and reviews has been made to body out the more intangible aspects of Reaney's dramaturgy, such as aesthetics and rehearsal, workshop and productional processes, and thus place the textual analysis in the

context of Reaney's dramaturgy as a whole.

As regards to specifics of style: titles of produced plays, whether published or not, are in italics; so are stage instructions in keeping with the common practice of setting the latter in a different type from the main body of the play. Additionally, the use of square brackets in a quotation indicates that the words or comments thus enclosed have been added by myself, generally for purposes of clarification. In the case of broken quotations appearing in the form of a sentence, the footnote reference is placed at the end of the final fragment of the specific quotation. Thus also, if two different sources are quoted in the course of a single sentence, they will be individually referenced, with the footnote number again appearing at the end of the quotation in question. Appropriate abbreviations of play titles will be used where deemed desirable and necessary, after the full form of the title has been given at least once in the appropriate section of the thesis. Additionally, the dates of plays given at the top of chapter headings are those of first productions; the only exception to this usage occurs in the case of poems or unproduced plays, in which circumstances, the dates appearing are those of publication or, if the work is also unpublished, of writing.

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INTRODUCTION

In defining maturity, C. S. Lewis once said: "When I became a man, I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up."[1] He could well have been expressing the viewpoint of James Reaney himself, a Canadian playwright whose continuing preoccupation with children, both of the archetypal and actual variety, has had a profound influence on his dramaturgy.

The Child, as a character and archetype in Reaney's poems and early drama, is a subject that has been more than amply explored in books and essays alike. What has not been quite so well explored is the effect that Reaney's dramatic work for and with actual children has had upon the changing theatrical expression of an essentially unchanging Child-centred vision of the human soul and the world around it.

The crux of the difference between such early plays as *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg* and such later ones as *Listen to the Wind, Colours in the Dark, The Donnellys* and *The Dismissal* hence lies less in theme and characterization than in a radical change of form. And it was a change largely accomplished over that period of time (1963-1974) when Reaney was not only writing children's plays but working intensively with children in improvisational workshops.

Between the *Easter Egg* (1962), the last written (though not the last performed) of Reaney's early dramas, and *Listen to the Wind* (1966), the first of the adult "whirling and fluid plays",[2] lie four years and five plays for children: *Names and Nicknames* (1963), *Let's Make a Carol* (1964), *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp* (1964), *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965) and *Apple Butter* (1965). Between *Listen to the Wind* and *Colours in the Dark* (1967), the second of the whirling and fluid plays for adults, lie yet three more children's plays: *Ignoramus* (1967), *The Canada Tree* (1967) and *Geography Match* (1967), The Listener's Workshop (1966-1969) which evolved from the *Listen to the Wind* rehearsals. Beyond *Colours in the Dark* lie *Genesis* (1968), *Don't Sell Mr. Aesop* (1967), *All the Bees and All the Keys* (1973), and the children's workshops which were an integral part of the rehearsal process for Parts One and Two of *The Donnellys* (1973,1974).

From the work and experimentation that Reaney did for and with children during this time, have evolved not only many radical changes in dramatic style and structure, but a different method of playwriting and rehearsal, and, in the final analysis, a new philosophy of what theatre itself should be.

From almost all aspects of the dramatic process then - vision, writing, rehearsal and production - Reaney's drama has, and continues to be, directly and indirectly influenced by his work for and with children. And it is

the purpose of this thesis to examine this profound influence on all levels of Reaney's dramaturgy.

Footnotes - Introduction

[1]C.S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" in *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*, ed. Sheila Egoff, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969) p. 210.

[2]James Reaney, *Masks of Childhood* with afterword by Brian Parker (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. viii.

Part One: The Early Plays

The Killdeer I (1960), *One-man Masque* (1960), *Night-blooming Cereus* (1960), *The Easter Egg* (1962), *The Sun and the Moon* (1965)

> ... the literary image of the child is not necessarily one of nostalgia and sentimentality. Babe and child represent perfectly sound objective symbols for a part of man's existence that does not, since he can be reborn, always co-exist with the actual state of babyhood and childhood.[1]
>
> -James Reaney

I. Early Influences - The Poetry

Reaney's reputation as a creative writer was first established on the basis of his poetry rather than his drama. However, he himself denies that he is simply a lyric poet who decided to become a dramatist instead. He claims that he was experimenting with theatre years before he became a recognized playwright and that many of his early poems already have strong dramatic qualities.[2]

There is evidence to support both these claims. Though *Night-blooming Cereus* was not performed on stage until 1960, it did achieve an earlier radio performance in 1959 and an early version of the libretto was completed as far back as 1952. Similarly, an early version of *The Sun and the Moon* (1965) appeared in 1958 under the title *The Rules of Joy* as an unsuccessful entry in the

Stratford Festival-Globe play competition. *Three Desks* (1967), in the form of a draft for a television play, also found its initial conception in 1958.

One-man Masque, by contrast, does not seem to have evolved from an earlier dramatic draft. However, much of its material significantly consists of poems Reaney wrote between 1958 and 1959. The successful transference of such poems as "Rachel" (1959), "Granny Crack" (1958), "The Ghost" (1959), "Doomsday" (1958), "The Executioner of Mary Stuart" (1958) and "The Dwarf", "The Baby" and "The Last Child" from "A Sequence in Four Keys" (1959) from the page to the stage tends to justify Reaney's opinion about the dramatic potential of his verse. It is an opinion further borne out by the fact that *A Suit of Nettles* (1958), with its extensive use of poetic dialogue, as well as "A Message to Winnipeg" (1960), *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* (1962) and "The Great Lakes Suite" from *The Red Heart* (1949) were all successfully adapted, in whole or in part, to the medium of radio. In the case of "A Message to Winnipeg", first produced in conjunction with musician John Beckwith as a program called "Poet and City - Winnipeg", the transference was particularly successful. Praised as a "vivid picturization (sic) of the personality of a city utilizing the qualities peculiar only to radio to stimulate the imagination to the fullest extent",[3] it won an award at

the twenty-fifth American Exhibition of Educational Radio and Television.

The adaptability of the poetry to radio and stage does more than just illustrate the aural evocativeness and highly readable rhythms of at least some of Reaney's early verse. Even more importantly, this adaptability was to prove indirectly responsible for finally pushing Reaney's fledgling dramatic efforts off the page or radio and onto the stage. As Alvin Lee notes in his book *James Reaney*:

> In the same year [1958], a reading on the radio of two of the eclogues from *A Suit of Nettles* induced Pamela Terry, who was to be the director of his two first public productions to comment on 'the extremely workable aural readability' of the two eclogues and to urge him to write for the theatre.[4]

Judging by the dates of the earlier drafts of *Night-blooming Cereus, Three Desks* and *The Sun and the Moon*, it seems clear that the idea of writing drama of some variety had already occurred to Reaney. However, it was due in no small part to Terry's efforts, that the poet finally made his theatrical debut with *The Killdeer I* on January 13, 1960. As Reaney himself says:

> If I were to tell the story fully of the first group of plays what would a few peaks be? First of all, the finding of a director who was interested in new plays, encouraged me to finish *Killdeer*, and who really gives in her productions a sense of listening, and this

director was Pamela Terry who at the time was working with the Toronto Alumni.[5]

However, the influence of the poetry certainly extends beyond just providing a sympathetic director to midwife Reaney's first stage production and, later on, *The Easter Egg* (1962).

In terms of style and content, the poetry's general influence can be seen in the often lengthy passages of blank or lyric verse that Reaney continues to insert into almost all of his adult drama up to and including *Colours in the Dark* (1967). In the case of the latter play and *One-man Masque*, the poetry's influence on content is particularly strong; the numerous poetic passages in both plays consist almost entirely of a selection of Reaney's earlier poems in original or adapted form.

The main heritage that the poetry of the forties, fifties and early sixties bequeathes to the drama, however, can be expressed in terms of themes and characterization. An important statement of Reaney's on the function of poetry, for example, reveals two main areas of thought or concern that were to be of great importance in the drama: the actual life of the world with all its prosaic particulars of action, thought, community and culture; and the metaphysical life of the soul with all its transcendent meanings and bold mythic patterns of character and behavior:

> The myth of Narcissus reaches out and touches with a clarifying ray the street scene where the 2 human beings glide by, also in the toils of reflection. That's how poetry works: it weaves street scenes and twins around swans in legendary pools. Let us make a form out of this: documentary on one side and myth on the other: Life and Art. In this form we can put anything and the magnet we have set up will arrange it for us.[6]

Though they were to remain distinct, both concerns were nonetheless meant to be closely yoked together to shed greater light on each other and thus express an overall vision greater than the separate truths of each part.

The documentary aspect of this equation for poetry comes forth most strongly in poems like *A Suit of Nettles*, *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*, "A Message to Winnipeg", and "The Royal Visit" and "The Great Lakes Suite" from *The Red Heart*. None of them deal with their subject matter in a naturalistic or purely descriptive manner but they do, no matter how obliquely, nonetheless focus around actual places, people or events in Canada. In doing do, the poems reveal something of the manner or tone in which the documentary was to be treated in the plays. Sometimes, as in "The Great Lakes Suite" which centres around the five Great Lakes and Lake St. Clair, the treatment is light and whimsical. At other times, as in "The Royal Visit" and *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*, which focus on a remembered childhood in Stratford, Ontario,

the people, places and events are treated with a mixture of gentle perceptive irony and warm nostalgia. In "A Message to Winnipeg" *The Dance of Death at London, Ontario* and sections of *A Suit of Nettles*, however, Reaney's pen moves towards a form of social satire that is at once sharper and more specific in intent.

A Suit of Nettles which features an anthropomorphic community of farm geese, justifies its early "Invocation to the Muse of Satire" by poking fun at birth control crusaders in Quebec (May Eclogue), Evangelistic preachers of questionable sobriety or religious qualifications (September Eclogue), certain philosophers of ancient and modern import (September Eclogue), modern educationalists and literary critics (July and August Eclogues) and even Canada itself (September and February Eclogues). Alvin Lee has in fact suggested that among many other things the whole poem can be regarded as a social commentary on two varying societies or ways of thought contending for the control of the country:

> The poem, through its Invocation, announces itself as a satire. It is satire in a very special way despite the one or two critics who say no. Perhaps the best way of moving towards a definition of the satire is to recognize that *A Suit of Nettles* is a description of two antithetical societies, one composed of crude, unthinking, stock-reflex, sensual creatures, and therefore a fit subject for the satirist's judgement and wrath, the other a civilized community struggling to find itself while it engages

> in conversations about art, philosophy, and religion, and in making poems.[7]

"A Message to Winnipeg" which Lee describes as an "urban counterpart" to *A Suit of Nettles* is more bitter in comparison if only because it does not offer this second "civilized community" as an alternative to the sterility and materialism of the first. Praised as "a vivid picturization (sic) of the personality of a city",[8] it portrays Winnipeg, in Lee's words, as a "place of Babylonian confusion and spiritual death".[9] The early Indians "Who did what the stars did and the sun"[10] and the later French Canadian settlers who "did what a star did and a Son"[11] have all been replaced by "the Neon People" of the present who disregard religion and nature alike. As Lee notes:

> It is these last who are the object of wrath, "the human fleas/Of a so-so civilization-half gadget, half flesh", who ritually cut the sacred patterns of commercial produce in factories, while huge Ixion wheels turn, who slaughter children and old ladies with glittering, hard, merciless and shark-like cars, and who totally ignore the voice of "the poet made up of one thousand rice paper Bible pages."[13]

The witty *Dance of Death at London, Ontario* (1963) similarly reveals, in Lee's words, a society of:

> economic injustice, rigid class distinction, luxurious self-indulgence or real poverty, vanished spiritual leadership, and the arts reduced to the level of any other smug middle-class luxury. [14]

The sardonic Death figure forcing the various community members to dance to his tune is hence an emblem of spiritual as well as physical death in London, Ontario.

Both these latter poems would seem even more pessimistic if Reaney did not, in other of his poetry, hold out the hope of other spiritual alternatives, of more cultured or humane societies like the circle of poets in *Nettles* or the comfortable rural community of *Twelve Letters*. In fact, with its sharp humour, utter contempt of philistinism[15] and strong advocacy of a new spiritually enlightened society, Reaney's social criticism sometimes becomes almost Shavian in tone and forms a particularly strong element in both his later creative and critical work. As he himself notes in *Hallowe'en* (No. 1):

> Maybe if we get used to seeing our society as being based on a story, we'll wake up and realize that we can get a better story; I happen to think that with the Industrial Revolution we accepted the story of the successful magician who could do anything he liked with the world around him (read Francis Yates on the Rosicrucians). Well, listen to the story another way: Newton, Rousseau and Descartes were Sorcerer's *Apprentices*, not the masters of their trade that the worshippers of Progress (another story) for so long considered them.[16]

How do we get that "better story" which will guide us away from the spiritual abyss of Reaney's Winnipeg or London and towards the building of a new society?

Reaney hints at two possibilities in his article "James Reaney's Canada". One, (implied perhaps by the kinder poetic treatment of the Indians and French Canadians in "Winnipeg") is through a greater love and understanding of Canada's past with all its hidden spiritual dimensions, the realization "that underneath the modern world of french fries or English-style fish and chips there lies another quite recent world - past and tragic."[17] The second, leading in part from the first, (and implied by the arrival, at the end of the London poem of a baby whose divine knowledge will defeat spiritual and physical Death alike) is the ability to perceive the Canada of today through the fresh, imaginative eyes of a child. If we too, like children (or poets), can learn to transform even the simplest of material objects into a thing of human wonder and significance, we will have found the key to transforming the frightening modern desert of dead things and objects into a life-giving sea of human and supernal meanings. Commenting on the ability to see something of eternity in a patch of marigolds by a yellow door, Reaney notes that:

> My country is the sort of place where that very simple ecstasy can take place... and if our country survives after the approaching end of the Industrial Revolution, one of the reasons will be the possibility of such humanizing and peaceful experiences .[18]

It is this second possibility of redeeming the world through becoming as psychic children again which brings us to the metaphysical[19] - and in terms of the poetry, most important - half of Reaney's mythic/documentary equation for art. For there is much in Reaney's poetic (and subsequent dramatic work) to suggest that when Reaney speaks of "Babe and child represent[ing] perfectly sound objective symbols for a part of man's existence,"[20] he is essentially viewing the figure of the Child as Jung does: as a symbol of the human soul's universal aspiration towards a self-realization and wholeness that will transform not only the soul but the world as well into something truly human and divine. In Jung's words:

> The child... is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind; of ways and possibilities of which our one-sided conscious mind knows nothing; a wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature. It represents the strongest, the most ineluctable desire in every being, namely the urge to realize itself.[21]

The metaphysical landscape which the Child inhabits in Reaney's work, borrows much in turn from Blake, Yeats and the Bible; it is an all encompassing universe that holds at one reach the divine and eternal source from which nature and humanity spring, and at the other, the demonic and nihilistic powers which seek to corrupt and destroy man and nature alike. In between lies the

sphere of fallen man, where both powers meet in battle for a world yet to be fully redeemed or damned. The myth, or essential story, that the archetypal Child enacts is that of the divine innocent thrust out of paradise and into the fallen world through birth, and then left to struggle "homewards" through the treacherous wilderness of human Experience. This journey is in turn aided or thwarted by the opposing forces of the holy and demonic contending for control of the soul - and through that the world. The powers of Light urge the Child towards an enlightened maturity which will allow it to transform the wilderness back into a Garden and reconcile the fallen world with the divine. The powers of Darkness, by contrast, seek to lose the Child even farther in the woods until it (the Child) petrifies into a part of the forest or becomes one of the savage demons waylaying other innocents.

This Child, which is representative of the imagination and soul of man, both in the generic and individual sense of the word, plays a dominant role in Reaney's poetry. Lost in a strange, hostile world of "blood, pus, horror, death, stepmothers and lies",[22] the unnamed Child of *The Red Heart* is probably the most beset by the human wilderness and the least certain of how to cope with it.

Some of the solutions it tries, do point towards significant pathways out of the woods. For instance, there is the possibility of spiritual kinship; the finding of mature souls or spiritual adults who will fulfill the role of brothers, sisters and parents in guiding the Child towards maturity ("Whither do you Wander?"). There is also the possibility of aspiring directly towards that higher realm of Eternity against whose everlasting brightness and power, the limitations and evils of this life fade to insignificance ("The Heart and the Sun", "The Red Heart"). Finally, there is the possibility of looking at the simple things of the world itself and imaginatively transforming them into things of higher beauty and significance ("Clouds", "Pink and White Hollyhocks", "The Two Kites"). In their emphasis on seeking a brighter, higher realm of spiritual reality either beyond this fallen world, or in it, through the positive use of the imagination and search for a strong nurturing spiritual love to help one grow up spiritually, these solutions draw upon the power of the divine that would rescue man from the wilderness of Experience.

However, other solutions that the Child of *The Red Heart* comes to in coping with Existence only lead farther into the wilderness, and spiritual death or corruption. Such solutions include the refusal to grow up; the

decision to remain in an arrested or regressed state of childhood rather than brave the terrors of Experience through which one must pass to reach spiritual maturity ("The School Globe", "The Upper Canadian"). Another negative solution related to the first is simply to give up the struggle to be a separate, self-determining human being at all and let oneself become an inanimate object freely manipulated by another's will, mind and whim ("The Top and the String"). A third solution is to become as cruel and nihilistic as the destructive powers that assail one in the fallen world ("The Sun Dogs", "The English Orphan's Monologue"). Finally, there is the possibility that the imagination itself may become corrupted by the evil in the fallen world and turn to producing terrifying nihilistic visions of Dread from which all hope of redemption either through love or imaginative insight is excluded ("Antichrist as a Child", "The Orphanage", "A Fantasy and a Moral"). This latter set of solutions with its emphasis on stifling or destroying human spiritual growth or, alternatively, twisting the imaginative and emotional faculties towards evil, despair and destruction, bring the Child into the control of the Dark or demonic spiritual powers antithetical to man's salvation.

The Child figure of *The Red Heart* with its negative and positive responses to the fallen world is continued

with variations into *A Suit of Nettles* and *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*. However, unlike the almost intensely private *The Red Heart*, these later two works of poetry display a greater concern for relating the Child's metaphysical adventure to the larger "documentary" life of a community. Branwell, the goose poet of *Nettles*, for instance, displays an ambiguous mixture of folly and wisdom in his dealings with the goosehouse community. Positively, he avoids Mopsus' initial decision to reject the whole of the goosehouse world, bad and good, in favour of a cold, crystalline Platonic sphere devoid of love, emotion and growth. His poetic abilities also raise him a notch above such thorough-going philistines as George and Dorcas who have fully succumbed to the materialism of their environment. In addition, he has the luck to find in Effie, a spiritual mentor or "sister" who can potentially guide his inner sight beyond the unredeemed "cramped stupid goosehouse world"[23] of Dorcas and George, towards a more redemptive, all-encompassing vision of himself and his world; she insists that he is the heir to that visionary child who sits in the white-walled garden playing on a panpipe whose "straws were cut from a farm/In which our universe of stars is but a stone."[24] However, where Effie eventually manages to convert Mopsus to a warmer, brighter and more divine understanding of the world, she does not succeed as well

with Branwell. Totally pre-occupied by his unhappy love affair with Dorcas, he cannot raise his poetic vision above his own bitterness and disillusionment to see Effie's joyful redemptive vision as it should be seen. Thus, when he looks at Effie's piping child he sees only himself crazed by despair and unhappiness. Instead of the white wall, only "twenty-eight silvery pock-faced whores"[25] of moons spinning nightmarishly around him; instead of a paradisial garden, an inferno where the most beautiful natural phenomena have become sordid rats in disguise. By slaughtertime, he has the insight to see that the ring which would save his physical life is also the jailer which would continue to keep his soul trapped in this life's "crazed prison of despair".[26] Nonetheless he still wants the ring - and Effie sadly comments that when he sheds his suit of nettles in Eternity, "One arm may always remain a goose wing."[27]

By contrast, Alvin Lee notes, "the boy-poet in *Twelve Letters*, since he appears in a landscape far less filled with potential menace"[28] is moving quietly and steadily towards physical and spiritual maturity. Even as the ambiguous puzzle who is Branwell results from a complex interaction between the prosaic goosehouse world and Branwell's poetic and spiritual potential, so is the developing maturity of the boy in *Letters* accomplished both through the Child's growing imaginative

and creative powers and the warm loving atmosphere of his actual childhood town of Stratford, Ontario. In a closing verse that lays the documentary aspect of *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* side by side with the mythic aspect, Reaney gives credit to the interaction between the two - Child and town, myth and documentary - that created the whole poet named James Reaney:

> Between the highschool & the farmhouse
> In the country and the town
> It was a world of love and of feeling
> Continually floating down
>
> On a soul whose only knowledge
> Was that everything was something,
> This was like that, that was like this -
> In short, everything was
> The bicycle of which I sing,[29]

The heritage passed on from the poetry to the plays is thus considerable particularly in terms of theme and characterization. The archetypal figure of the Blakean/Jungian Child both in its redeemed and perverted forms sweeps full force off the pages of Reaney's poetry and into the scripts of his drama; it would be impossible to discuss the action of character and theme particularly in the early plays without reference to this mythic Child. Similarly carried into the drama is the ambition to combine documentary and myth into a single form that creates an integrated vision of both; it would again be difficult to discuss the interesting mixture of social

commentary and metaphysics in Reaney's plays without making some reference to similar experiments in *A Suit of Nettles* and *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*. A continued use of poetry and verse, some of it directly borrowed from the earlier poetry, also carries into the plays, leaving an indelible mark on content and style.

What the poetry does not bequeath to the plays is a mastery of form, a quick understanding of how to express these elements of content, theme, characterization and documentary/myth focus in effective stage terms. And, as Stan Draglund suggests, this is a very important consideration in analysing Reaney's creative accomplishment as a whole:

> When you stand within James Reaney's art as a whole, and concentrate not so much on the distinctive world that he creates or on his recurrent themes, but rather on the forms that contain it all and the techniques that make it work, you get a different impression from what most Reaney criticism gives you. In a sense form is *the* question with Reaney. Form has been evolving; the vision has remained pretty much constant and has been a staple of Reaney crticism.[30]

The early plays, therefore, are worth analysing not merely because they mark Reaney's first attempts to move his "distinctive world" and "recurrent themes" from the page of a book to the page of a script but because, just as importantly, they constitute his first experiments - significantly done before his dramatic work for and

with actual children - towards finding a dramatic form and technique to "contain it all".

II. The Plays

Based on Reaney's comments that "one of the few sentences of literary criticism that had sunk through to me was Carl Jung's division of the human soul into four parts represented by an old woman, an old man, a young man and a young girl",[31] some critics have suggested that it is possible to regard almost all the characters in the early plays as emanations of the Child's soul rather than as strictly objective characters in their own right. For example, in her unpublished thesis, "An Archetypal Pattern in Reaney", Arlene Fuhr suggests that a negative figure like "the cruel mother is the product of the realized potential for evil within the child"[32] and that these internal "forces of evil" must be "acknowledged and conquered" before salvation can be achieved "through the assistance of beneficial characters".[33]

Whether or not one is willing to accept Fuhr's argument in full, the fact nonetheless remains that many of the early plays, including *The Killdeer I* only work at their most effective level if viewed, at least in part, as a form of expressionistic drama.[34] This is particularly true in terms of characterization and action.

Viewed realistically, for example, both Manatee and Ballad appear as rather superfluous characters, the latter in particular seeming to be a clumsy *deus ex machina* inserted at the last moment to extricate characters and playwright alike from a difficult courtroom situation. Seen as the opposing spiritual poles of the play between which the action and other characters move, both figures become immensely more plausible. Even as the gossip between Mrs. Gardner and Mrs. Budge becomes ever more wild and outrageous until they actually burst out in action as the old scavenger hens they increasingly seem in spoken metaphor, the dark forces of hate, fear, sterility and destruction build in the first Act and the opening scenes of the next until they step out of the night and the storm in the visible form of Mr. Manatee. With Madam Fay apparently triumphant, Eli unredeemed, Rebecca facing death, and Harry plunged in spiritual confusion and despair, we can seen in Manatee the whole of that farm of darkness from which those soul-destroying "hens" Budge and Gardner metaphorically emerge:

> My farm was in the Country of Night and grew nothing
> But fields of nightshade and bladder campion,
> Gardens of burdocks. Mandrakes in the haymows,
> I fed my cattle on such fare as made their udders
> Run black blood and their wombs bear freemartens,
> I raised weasels in my hen houses and I
> Set traps for barley but bred rats who
> Ate the little pigs as they lay sucking the sow.[35]

However, as the play goes on, the positive powers of love, fertility, truth and the desire to grow, begin to win out over those of evil, and eventually emerge triumphant in the embodied form of Ballad, the benevolent redemptive spirit of that good which has come from the young peoples' efforts.

Even more importantly, Ballad and Manatee can be seen not merely as opposing spiritual poles, but the embodiment of those metaphysical realms of the divine and the infernal which contend for the control of the archetypal Child as it wends its dangerous mythic journey through Experience. In figures like Clifford and Madam Fay, the Child appears in its most demonic aspect; having succumbed to the evil and malignancy of the world around him, it vindictively tries to stop other aspects, or figures, of the Child from reaching the maturity and self-realization it itself has failed to reach. To this end, it uses its own genuine but now malignant spirituality in an attempt to corrupt or supplant these other figures' spiritual energies and identity with its own. Thus Eli, who has been victimized in this fashion by both Madam Fay and Clifford is described, in Rebecca's words as a "doll... stuffed with filth... not evil... not good".[36] Thus also, the greatest threat that meets Eli when he at last attempts to climb out of the state of regressed childhood into

which he has retreated, is a concerted effort by Madam Fay to fully turn first Eli's psychic environment then Eli himself into a twisted spiritual copy of herself:

> I'll be the orange devil waiting in the stove
> I'll be the chimney trumpeting the night...
> I'll be the back door tapping like a blind man
> I'll be the cistern dripping like an idiot's mouth...
>
> ...I'll be the bannister
> In the velvet hand of darkness
> I'll be your eye like the twisting white doorknob
> I'll be Eli! You'll be me. You'll be mine![37]

If Clifford and Madam Fay represent the demonic possibilities of the Child, a figure like Mrs. Gardner embodies the possibility of the Child succumbing to the dead materialism of the world around it. Though less consciously malignant in intent, this aspect of the Child also attempts a form of spiritual possession which would turn other Child figures into copies of its own regressed spiritual state. Thus, Mrs. Gardner's idea of doing what's best for her son is to lock him into the same cramped little "parlour" of her mind where even love, despiritualized into a matter of lust or social convenience, is thrown into the same ugly cluster of cheap baubles and trivia accumulated over the years.

If their emphasis on the Child's potential for spiritual sterility or destructiveness moves figures like Mrs. Gardner, Madam Fay and Clifford towards Manatee's dark realm, the opposite is true of Rebecca who embodies

the Child's potential for spiritual growth and the eventual achievement of a loving, creative maturity. In her successful farming career and determination to untie "the evil knot"[38] of old bloodshed and hatred with love, is reflected a love for the natural growth of the land and the human soul that moves Rebecca well towards Ballad's domain. However, this Child figure's very advancement towards spiritual maturity invites the hostility and persecution of other Child figures like Madame Fay who have been less successful at working their way through the wilderness of Experience. (Even Mrs. Gardner who regards Rebecca as "just a hick" momentarily fears her as an obstacle to getting Harry wed to something "a bit better"[39]). Thus, the action of the play ultimately focuses around the question of whether the Child's potential for spiritual good and growth (Rebecca) will be overcome by the Child's potential for spiritual evil and sterility (Madam Fay, Clifford, Mrs. Gardner), and through that, whether the realm of spiritual light (Ballad) or that of darkness (Manatee) will prevail. These questions in turn, remain to be resolved by the choices that the Child figures of Harry and Eli make in their still unresolved struggle through the wilderness of Experience.

The Killdeer I being a comedy,[40] both Eli and Harry eventually win free of the spiritually deadening or destructive influence of their respective guardians and

mothers, working their way, directly or indirectly through Rebecca, to a spiritual maturity that makes the appearance of Ballad possible. In doing so, they take advantage of two pathways to salvation. One is the constructive use of the creative imagination. In Harry's case, this means the mastery of law in the interests of truth, an apt weapon against his wife and mother's smothering materialism. Since words give the material world a human name and meaning which bring it under man's power, it is no wonder that the mastery of words implicit in Harry's legal training gives him a spiritual maturity and dignity in the second Act of the play that he lacks in the first. For Eli, who has fallen prey less to materialism than to the ruthless exploitation of his emotions and imagination, it is more important to simply exchange a negative personal code of imagery for a positive one. It is only when he can conceive of himself as a falcon soaring in the open sky rather than a frightened rabbit hiding beneath the shadow of a hawk, or even as an extension of Madam Fay's demonic spirit, that Eli can work up the courage to shake off his mother's influence and help Rebecca.

The second and most important pathway in terms of *The Killdeer I* (and most of the other early plays for that matter) is a direct alliance or identification with the spiritually enlightened Child figure in the play,

who by reason of its psychic maturity can serve as a spiritual "parent" to raise the other figures to maturity. This entails the establishment of spiritual family bonds to replace the "real" but often destructive blood and legal bonds that already exist. Thus Eli can only become a "falcon" after Rebecca and Harry, his legal wife and her lover have established themselves as his spiritual parents in opposition to his "real" guardian (Clifford) and mother (Madam Fay). Moreover, Harry himself, despite the enobling effect of his legal training only becomes capable of spiritual and physical parenthood after finding in Rebecca the true wife and mother he missed in Vernelle and Mrs. Gardner respectively. With the appearance of Ballad and the positive resolution of Eli, Harry, Rebecca and even Madam Fay's physical and spiritual difficulties (Clifford and Mrs. Gardner have been removed from the action through death), it may be fair to say that the archetypal Child of *The Red Heart*, who is a composite of all these characters in their negative and positive potentialities, has indeed worked its way through the wilderness of Experience to become, in Fuhr's words "an individual who has achieved, or at least has found the road to, resurrection".[41]

If regarding figures like Ballad and Manatee as the opposing metaphysical poles of the play clarifies certain elements of action and characterization in the play, the

same is even more true of regarding most of the main figures as the negative and positive emanations of a young soul struggling to reach maturity. Such a viewpoint explains, for example, the emphasis in early plays like *The Killdeer I* on what the characters are, and are in relationship to each other rather than on what they actually do. It further makes understandable the frequently childish behaviour of many of the negative and positive characters alike. Being a Child it is only logical that a figure like Madam Fay should use the means of a child - games, story-telling and elaborate make-believe - to achieve her ends; moreover, even the most destructive and evil of her schemes is carried out with such an exuberance of energy and puckish play that it is difficult not to see the face of the child grinning up through the mask of the adult. At the same time, if the tools of childhood - make-believe, games and toys - can be used to repress and pervert young spirituality, they can also be used to liberate it towards maturity. Thus Harry plays with a top to show Eli that manhood is not an entirely different and unreachable state from the childhood to which Eli still clings - but its natural extension and fulfillment. Similarly, play, in the end proves to be that staircase between light and dark that Fay had sought so eagerly and so vainly with Rebecca's mother. It is only when

Rebecca herself "*grabs hold of Madam Fay's hands and whirls around and around with her, like two children playing at spinning*"[42] that Madam Fay is released from the burden of her own anguished childhood and left free (hopefully) to begin growing up.

The dramaturgical difficulties with *The Killdeer I* arise from the fact that in addition to being an expressionistic play charting the mythic journey of the human soul, it is also meant to be a social satire; not only the archetypal Child of the early poetry, but the "sterile land" of such poems as *A Suit of Nettles*, "A Message to Winnipeg" and *The Dance of Death in London, Ontario* thus finds its way into *The Killdeer I*. The difficulty does not really lie in the quality of the satire. Commenting on the same petty, pretentious society that embraces social status as its highest good, the sharp yet humorous social satire that dominates the first act of the play undeniably functions very well on its own terms; one critic writing as late as 1972, in fact, describes "Act I of *Killdeer* [as being] still Reaney's most successful drama."[43] Nor, if one regards this vein of social satire as the complementary documentary half of Reaney's double-focused equation for poetry does it pose a problem of thematic inconsistency to the mythic vision in the play. As Julia Schneider argues, it is possible to view the spiritual action of *The Killdeer I*

and *The Easter Egg* alike in terms of a movement from the bronze world of unredeemed materialism, through the silver realm of a spirituality gone fantastic and malignant, to the golden sphere of childhood innocence and spirituality regained on a mature level.[44]

Where the difficulty *does* lie is in Reaney's attempt to cram both the mythic and social levels of the play into a linear plot line and static realistic set ill-suited to accommodate several rapidly developing levels of reality at once. This may account, at least in part for the feeling of "rapids" that Reaney says his early plays tend to induce in audiences. In his essay, "A Problem of Meaning" Dudek elaborates on this observation when he notes that the first acts of *The Sun and The Moon, The Killdeer I* and *Three Desks* alike tend towards a fairly realistic vein of social satire that works well in theatrical terms. The "rapids" consist of a sudden shift in the second and third Acts "from a fairly realistic satiric mode to a rocky, fantastic symbolism that sets the audience back on their heels."[45] The experience, Dudek notes, is similar to suddenly being thrust into the world of Yeats, Maeterlinck and J.M. Barrie after a first act of George Bernard Shaw.

The difficulty with presenting an audience with a first act of Shaw in a naturalistic set is that it inclines the spectators to henceforth regard the characters

and action alike in a realistic vein that is detrimental to following the symbolic or expressionistic level of the action in other acts. Thus, instead of seeing the Child's - and within that, man's - soul fighting its way through an alien world to a salvation of the spirit, all the spectator is likely to see in these later acts is a number of adults, who for unexplained reasons of their own, are acting and speaking rather childishly. This, in turn, has led a number of otherwise sympathetic critics to complain, with Michael Tait, that Reaney at his worst "not only writes of children but unfortunately tries to write as if he were one."[46] For Dudek in particular, the propagation of a Blakean universe still does not excuse poor dramaturgy:

> A more sympathetic literary account would relate this infantile strain to Blake's theory of innocence and the general idyllic myth of childhood... If so, it is to take the Gospel teaching "Except ye become as little children"... much too literally. Also it is one thing to write *for* children as Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll have done - but quite another to be childish or stylistically insipid in a work written for adults.[47]

Ross Woodman suggests in his book length study of Reaney that the latter's early problems in expressing his Child-centred artistic vision on the stage stemmed largely from a misunderstanding of both audience response and the dramatic form itself:

> He [Reaney] had assumed that, while following the action on a conscious level, the audience would be psychically alerted by the images recurrent in the dialogue which gradually shaped themselves, through a kind of incremental repetition into long forgotten fairytales. The assumption, however, was not grounded in the dramatic form, a form which did not allow an audience to recognize the fact that they were in the presence of a child's world.[48]

If so, it was a dramaturgical problem that Reaney was not to resolve in the context of his other early full-length dramas like *The Easter Egg* and *The Sun and the Moon*. In fact, it would appear that from Reaney's point of view much of *The Killdeer I*'s difficulties were simply technical ones rising from trying to put too much action and too many characters onto an inflexible set. As he notes in *Stage Voices*, "after watching producers struggle so disastrously with the change of set that divides the central set of *Killdeer*[I] I determined never again."[49] He resolved to correct this in his next full-length drama by trimming characters and action down to suit a static set:

> Another impulse behind the play [*The Easter Egg*], and now I branch into problems of direction, was to write for Pamela Terry a neat tidy play, concentrated in time and place, with few characters. My previous play *Killdeer*, beautifully realized by her, had presented difficulties because of too much time, space and character.[50]

That Reaney essentially misunderstood the main difficulties of form presented by *The Killdeer I* is

evident by the fact that this same problem of poorly blended levels of reality is continued, if not accentuated, in *The Easter Egg* as well.

The mythic framework of *The Killdeer I* is repeated in *The Easter Egg* in modified form. The higher metaphysical figures of Ballad and Manatee are gone, but the action still polarizes between two Child figures who represent the negative and positive potentialities of the human soul. One is Polly, who like Rebecca, possesses a warm, creative love that pushes spiritual and physical life alike towards fructification. The other is Bethel who combines the joyous, exuberant malignancy of a Madam Fay with the materialistic aspirations of a Mrs. Gardner; she is the regressed Child in both its demonic and materialistic forms.

The other three characters in the play mark their spiritual maturity or immaturity by their alliances with one or the other figure. For example having rejected Bethel's sexual charms in favour of the higher goal of helping Kenneth recover his sanity, Ira finds himself spiritually pulled towards Polly, the positive spiritual force in the play. George, on the other hand, falls easily away from Polly and into Bethel's power because of his own spiritual insecurity and infantilism. As the stage instructions indicate, *"he is not completely human but a special combination of weakness and shyness*

and boldness, even cruelty."[51]

It is Kenneth, as the main protagonist, however, who must conduct the greatest struggle between the pole of spiritual maturity and fulfillment Polly represents and the unredeemed materialism and infantilism Bethel represents. Traumatized by the suicide of his father and subsequent extinction (through Cocoanut's death and the Easter Egg's disappearance) of any redemptive vision of kindness or love in the world, Kenneth at first seems inclined to sink into the spiritual deadness or malevolence Bethel embodies.

However, because *The Easter Egg*, like *The Killdeer I* is a comedy, Bethel fails in her attempt to turn Kenneth into either a rapacious monster or a docile automation for cleaning silver. Like Eli and Harry, Kenneth eventually works his way through the wilderness, partially on the strength of his creative imagination which allows him to join in constructive play activity with Polly, but mostly through finding, in Ira and Polly, loving spiritual parents to guide his soul to the light. With the restoration of the Easter Egg, the past power of the godmother's love is joined to the present loving powers of Ira and Polly to at last outweigh, or at least balance those of past and present evil inherent in George and Bethel. The result for the patiently striving Kenneth is a dramatic passage into the true spiritual maturity

which at once transforms him into the "naked innocent... with green light and sunstreams"[52] of the past and, through that, into the "clever and talkative young man"[53] of the present. This maturity allows Kenneth to at last become the master of his own "house" or soul, even as his growing affinity for Polly earlier allows him to break out of the locked "room" of old words and feelings, to come to her aid. As master, he brings the Bethel part of his spirituality, which has run rampant up to now, under firm control (*she* can polish the silver instead) and firmly allies himself with the positive spiritual powers that Polly represents by embracing her, on equal spiritual terms now, as a wife.

Reaney tries, in a number of ways, to signal both the presence of the archetypal Child and the movement of the metaphysical action from Bethel's bronze and silver realm of deadened or malignant spirituality to the golden sphere of childhood innocence and spirituality grown mature. As in *The Killdeer I*, The Childish origins of the characters (and the regressed spiritual state of Bethel and George in particular) are hinted at through their childish behaviour and language. In Brian Parker's words:

> The rhetoric....is often deliberately childish, using expletives such as 'Golly', 'Gee', 'Oh shucks' - or conveying immaturity more subtly in a speech like George's 'There was just that

> funny old glass Easter Egg all wrapped up in a yellow old piece of newspaper', where the placing of the 'olds' in non-adult. Similarly, there is childish behaviour: Bethel jumping on a table to claim herself 'King of the Castle', for example, or the snatching of objects from each other's hands which is almost as much a Reaney trademark as the killing of pet animals.[54]

Once more games, toys and make-believe become the double-edged sword used by both negative and positive spiritual forces to repress or liberate the young soul struggling to reach maturity. A toy train and a doll are used by Polly to guide Kenneth towards an important understanding of love and compassion, even as Bethel uses a toy rocking chair in a final attempt to push Kenneth's mind back to the traumatic childhood incident of despair and violence which brought him under her control in the first place.

This latter incident signals Bethel's last desperate attempt to lock Kenneth back in that "room whose walls were covered with just the words you knew. Your words"[55] and to restore the "house" itself to a confused place where people *do* marry other people because of bats being killed. However, "*the blinding flash*" and "*formidable, magic sound* [of] *something breaking*"[57] which greets Kenneth's touching of the Easter Egg has already signalled the triumph of quite a different brand of spirituality. Foreshadowed by Kenneth's breaking from the locked room - the first occasion on which we hear that "*formidable,*

magic sound"[58] - it is a spirituality which transfigures material things rather than succumbing to them (*"the telephone rings but in a way no earthly telephone rings - but as if silver hollow currants, gooseberries, and cherries were being poured into a thin glass cup."*[59]), and transcends the boundaries of time and space:

> *He* [Kenneth] *holds up the egg. Places the egg on a chair rather as if it were an alter ego and then directly addresses us as if we had leapt ahead about two or three years. These flashfronts should be emphasized with lighting and there should be overlapping of speeches to suggest several layers of time.*[60]

At the same time, the inexorable build of the action towards an all-important dinner party which is on the brink of beginning as the play ends, also sets the action of the play in a realistic social context as well. There is not a doubt that just outside the walls of Bethel's house there teems the same sharply but amusingly treated Canadian community life that pervades the first Act of *The Killdeer I*. There is equally no doubt that the characters in the play are also an integral part of this realistic yet satirically treated social sphere with its Montreal bishops who take pride in their lack of French, social ordeals-by-teaparty, and general stuffy air of self-satisfied primness. The first two Acts in particular, humorously establish Bethel's dominant role in the upper echelons of this society and the rather

Machiavellian means she has employed to get there. Similarly, if George does not establish his high standing in the "sterile land" of the community through his highly chaotic ministerial career ("I was in Business Administration and then I flunked out so there seemed nothing left but theology"[61]) he quickly does so by forfeiting his fiancee "for some etiquette and the fact that the Travellers' Hotel serves watery mashed potatoes."[62] At the same time, Ira, who is a doctor, and Polly, who refuses to be herded into a library job which would kill her love for books, pose more positive spiritual possibilities in the community. And it is indeed Polly who undertakes Kenneth's social training, teaching him dancing and manners as well as vocabulary. The play ends with Kenneth, aided by Ira and Polly, preparing to mark his new-found maturity - and initiation into the larger community of which the others are a part - by hosting Bethel's party himself.

Again, both the metaphysical and social levels of reality in the play work well on their own terms. Nor is there really a thematic inconsistency between the two levels. Bethel is oppressive spiritually to Kenneth and Polly for exactly the same reasons that she is so successful socially in the vicious, materialistic and pretentious environment of the community. The difficulty is, that as in *The Killdeer I* Reaney tries to fit both

realities into the Procrustean bed of a static realistic set and linear plot line.

Of the two levels, the metaphysical one comes closest to losing the tug-of-war over the control of the action. In *The Killdeer I*, the strongly metaphysical figures of Manatee and Ballad play an important role in drawing the characters and action of the play into the realm of the mythic. In *The Easter Egg*, these strong metaphysical anchors have gone, leaving the unchanging realistic set, continuing social context created by party preparations, and dominant use of prose rather than the symbolic language of poetry, to pull character and action even more deeply into a realistic context. This in turn, only intensifies the problem first encountered in *The Killdeer I* of action and character understandable on a metaphysical level becoming rather childish and unmotivated in a realistic environment.

At the same time, the problems that the static set causes for the "documentary" element of *The Killdeer I* also repeat themselves in *The Easter Egg*. That is, because of the inability of the static parlour room sets to quickly accommodate significant changes in time, place and even populace, much of the more interesting action in both plays has to be communicated as lengthy passages of exposition, or descriptions of incidents that have happened offstage. The hilarious party at the bank

manager's in *The Killdeer I*, and the whole of the intriguing Bethel Story as experienced by Ira, Polly, Kenneth, and Bethel herself are particularly noteworthy examples of fascinating action banished to an offstage limbo.

A dissatisfaction with the technical restrictions of a realistic indoor set particularly in regard to the scope of the social level of the plays may have been the motivation behind Reaney's next dramaturgical experiment in setting. For the suggestive rather than realistic set of *The Sun and The Moon* allows the action to move freely from the inside to various points on the outside of the house without a scene change:

> *The Manse, both inside and outside at Millbank, Ontario. A road runs past the Manse, its great elm, and its green lawns. This can be simply presented by a piano on one side of the stage and a roadside boulder with a signpost beside it on the other side of the stage.*[63]

This not only allows Reaney to portray onstage the same narrow, stuffy community life he largely leaves behind the scenes in *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg* but to connect it more directly to the metaphysical poles of the play.

These spiritual poles remain similar to those set up in the earlier two plays, though Reaney, perhaps with the intention of strengthening the metaphysical function

of character and action alike, has combined in Kingbird and Shade, not only the negative and positive manifestations of the Child, but the higher abstract meanings of Ballad and Manatee as well. Thus, Mrs. Shade is simultaneously a Manatee-like emanation of darkness, sterility and evil, and a regressed Child figure who, like Bethel or Madam Fay uses a child's tools of games, make-believe and energetic play to mislead and trap her victims. Thus also, the Reverend Kingbird is both a Ballad-like figure of light, fertility and good, and a fulfilled Child figure, like Rebecca or Polly, who offers a loving spiritual kinship and the creative use of the imagination as paths to salvation.

As in *The Easter Egg* and *The Killdeer I* there is a strong element of expressionism at work in the overall action and characterization of the play. For example, the similarity between Dennis and Stephen's dark situation, taken together with Stephen's assertion that before meeting Mrs. Shade, he too like Andrew and Susan "lived in a world just like this. An old house with books and a pianoforte",[64] tends to link these four young people together as various emanations of the archetypal Child. Andrew and Susan, aided by a strong spiritual kinship with Kingbird and a natural tendency towards poetry and music have kept the orchard and house of their psyches a place of "music and love and laughing and games and

brother and sister."[65] Dennis and Stephen, through their own cruelty and despair have allowed the same orchard to fall into ruin and the house to become a place of perversion, lust, deception and madness ruled by a demon of hatred and nihilism. Of the four, Susan and Dennis are the most fixed in place. Susan, who is already well on the way to establishing a mature balance of heart and mind in her desire to be scientist, wife and mother combined is firmly entrenched in Kingbird's realm. She only really feels the threat of Shade's power when she feels tempted to give in to her own feelings of hatred and thoroughly thrash the troublesome intruder. However, what Kingbird intuitively knows and Susan quickly senses - that hatred and violence bring one into Shade's spiritual realm - Dennis has yet to learn. He may have the spiritual strength and awareness to actively fight against Shade's evil, but he nonetheless remains inextricably tied to her because he conducts his campaign against her in the same spirit of nihilism and childish punitiveness she herself embodies.

Andrew and Susan are by contrast somewhat less certain of their respective loyalties. Stephen, while seemingly more entrenched in Shade's realm of spiritual darkness than Dennis, is nonetheless drawn through his admiration of the Kingbird family, towards a positive spiritual redemption which will bring him back to "a clean

country where there is an orchard and it's clean and people honestly try to find out something true."[66] Similarly, Andrew, while as much Kingbird's child in the flesh and the spirit as Susan, is drawn towards Shade's realm by both a yearning for the same irresponsible freedom that helped bring Dennis and Stephen under Shade's control in the first place, and a certain denial of the natural growth and fertility of life implicit in his hiding of Susan's ring.

The struggle between the respective realms of Kingbird and Shade for the possession of *both* Stephen and Andrew can thus be viewed as a battle between the contrasting psychic powers of light and dark for the control of the whole Child.

At the same time, these same powers of dark and light also fight for control of the village of Millbank. Mrs. Shade rapidly finds a toehold in the community through Edna Moody who is as spiritually stunted by her drive for social status or power as Mrs. Gardner and as childishly spiteful as Dennis when thwarted:

> Edna: Ellen, I'll never speak to you again - I'll go home and break your little doll's house to pieces with a poker if you go on.[67]

Rising rapidly in the Millbank community under Mrs. Moody's patronage, Mrs. Shade is almost an embodiment

of the village's tendency towards a vicious spiritual infantilism that disguises itself as outraged righteousness and virtue. At one end, as symbolized by Shade's own trade as an abortionist, this infantilism expresses itself as a hostility towards natural fertility and growth which temporarily drives the positive forces of Frank and Ellen out of town. At the other, as can be seen in Shade's own delight in disguises, tricks and sensational effects, it expresses itself as a pre-occupation with appearances and surface realities, a preference for the ugly, sensational lie or distortion over the simple goodness, truth and joy Kingbird represents. The threat to the community is eventually ended by Ellen Fall for reasons that tie back to the metaphysical structure of the play. Where Dennis and Stephen fail in their attempts to expose Mrs. Shade because they are still in her power, Ellen succeeds because, given a clear choice between the two realms Kingbird and Shade represent, she had decisively chosen the life, fertility and growth Kingbird and Frank (Kingbird's natural son) offer, over the spiritual and physical abortion Shade presents. This clear, truthful recognition and declaration by a member of the community of what Shade truly is breaks Shade's power and moves the community back under Kingbird's pastorship.

However, the ending of the play is not as unequivocally comedic as that of *The Killdeer I* or *The Easter Egg*. Shade is neither reformed nor bested in any final sense; she simply acknowledges that she has been bested in *this* town and prepares to move on to the next - perhaps ours. Moreover, unlike the metaphysical action of the earlier two plays which clearly marks the Child figure's progression from a fallen state of the soul to a redeemed one, the metaphysical action of *The Sun and the Moon* ends in a "stand-off". Andrew, who is saved from Shade's charms by his love of music (he returns for his piano lesson) and decision in favour of the natural cycles of growth and fertility (he returns Susan's engagement ring) comes back to Kingbird's realm. Stephen, who ultimately rejects Kingbird's offer to be his spiritual father, returns to Shade's realm affirming that he is indeed her true son "not in the flesh but in the spirit."[68] Perhaps the implication of this "stand-off" is that the battle between light and dark for the soul of this adolescent nation - which is also a collection of Millbanks - also has yet to be resolved in any ultimate sense.

The Sun and the Moon is a significant play for a number of reasons. Firstly, it marks Reaney's initial attempt to actually put onstage the narrow, provincial community of *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg*. Secondly,

instead of remaining a pervasive though static element in the play, this community now passes through a spiritual action of its own closely related to the metaphysical action of the play. In fact, it is curious to note that in contrast to the earlier plays of *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg*, it is the metaphysical level of the play which remains relatively static, while the social level dynamically moves from a relative state of light and innocence (Kingbird's initial control, Frank and Ellen's secret marriage) through spiritual corruption (Shade's appearance and growing power) to a kind of redemption based on a better moral knowledge of good and evil (Ellen's exposure of Shade, and Kingbird's renewed and stronger control).

The Sun and the Moon also demonstrates most clearly the limitations that Reaney's early dramaturgical techniques impose on the documentary as well as the mythic aspect of his art. In *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg*, a realistic one-to-one correspondence between actor and role only intensifies the problems created by trying to cram several levels of reality into a linear plot line. For, faced with a limited number of actors - and thus characters - Reaney similarly tries to cram into each character several metaphorical identities all meant to function at the same time. *The Sun and the Moon* is no less exempt than the other two plays from the difficulties

of the metaphysical reality of the characters meshing poorly with their social reality. However, in terms of this third play, the one-to-one actor/character ratio creates additional problems when it comes to portraying a whole community onstage. The only solution Reaney seems to be able to find in response to the problem is to expand the already large cast list to include *"six assorted ladies, one of them pregnant"*[69] to make up the Women's Institute, and to have various members of the community occasionally pass down the imaginary road during the course of the action. This is not nearly enough, however, to suggest a whole congregation onstage calling for their pastor's dismissal, and later on being divided into two separate congregations. Moreover, while the suggestive status of the set allows for greater scope in place and action than the realistic parlour room sets, its essentially static nature again proves a limiting factor. The semi-imaginary road, grounds and house of the Manse remain onstage as fixed points throughout the action; when an orchard is introduced for one scene, it has to be placed on a part of the stage not already occupied by some other landmark in the imaginary landscape:

> *Played at the very front of the stage as if the orchard in front of Reverend Kingbird's house and across the road from it.*[70]

This again means reducing a whole world of time and space outside the limits of the set to long descriptive passages. Much of Frank and Ellen's amusing courtship and elopement, the Reverend Kingbird's earlier affair with Mrs. Fall, and the whole of Mrs. Shade's own filthy but fascinating life remain only intriguing tidbits touched upon but not portrayed. This tends to give figures like the man with the wheelbarrow or the bicycling boy who occasionally cross the stage on unspecified errands of their own, the aspect of wistfully sent emissaries from a great bustling concrete world of city, town, farm and countryside still left, perforce, beyond the circumference of the stage.

What we do see of the community's life onstage is in turn weakened by Reaney's demand that the characters and action of the play simultaneously work on a metaphysical as well as a realistic level. For, while the social level of the action tends to work against the metaphysical level for many of the same reasons it does in *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg*, the large communal aspect of *The Sun and the Moon* makes it amply clear that Reaney's method of combining disparate realities in a linear plot line is a sword that cuts two ways. For, in his concern for communicating the universal and mythic dimension of the action, Reaney seems to deliberately severe the documentary aspect of all three

plays from a firm grounding in actual place, location and event. In terms of *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg* which are vaguely set as being *"somewhere in the English part of Canada"*[71] the difficulties raised by the social realm's divorce from concrete actuality are much less apparent if only because the larger life of the community either remains offstage or on the periphery of the action. In *The Sun and the Moon* where the whole community is an integral part of the onstage action, the problems become more obvious. Reaney seems to have feared that by rooting the characters and action of the play too solidly in the realm of everyday reality, they would fail to convey the higher metaphysical realities also inherent in them. In practice, the lack of a strong enough anchor in actual place, time and fact tends to allow the strong metaphysical element of the play to pull the communal scenes into an uneasy limbo between fantasy and social realism. On one hand, Reaney's satiric portrayal of the community is just sharp and perceptive enough, particularly in matters of dialect and psychology, to give the fictional town of Millbank an aura of realism. On the other, Millbank's tentative realistic status as a typical stuffy provincial community worthy of social satire is to a large extent vitiated by the more extravagant and fantastical actions of the metaphysical realm which demands that the community

simultaneously operate within the context of that vast mythic struggle between the powers of supernal light and dark for the soul of the archetypal Child. In the end, the whole community of Millbank is beset by the same painful tug-of-war between realities which plagues many of the individual characters in Reaney's early plays; the childish behaviour of people like Edna and the ladies of the Institute may indeed mark their identity as repressed Child figures under Shade's spiritual control, but they are at the same time too firmly rooted in a realistic social context to appear as anything but a group of adults acting childishly.

The dramaturgical problems posed by Reaney's first three full-length plays can be essentially distilled into one: an uncertainty as to how to effectively portray his two-fold artistic vision onstage. In *The Killdeer I*, *The Easter Egg* and *The Sun and the Moon* Reaney experiments with threading both his Child-centred myth of the maturing human soul and his satiric documentary vision of the "sterile land" of Canadian society into a linear plot line and static set. In doing so, he demands both character and action to simultaneously march to the beat of two different "drummers" or realities, a demand, as Michael Tait notes, fraught with dramaturgical hazards:

> The characterization in *The Killdeer* [I] betrays a comparable uncertainty of purpose. The characters for the most part move on two levels. Having conceived them in the context of the bizarre fantasy which pervades the piece, Reaney then attempts in a number of instances to demonstrate their truth to nature and invest them with the authority of humanity. This combination of fantasy and verisimultude is precarious.[72]

By contrast *One-man Masque* and *Night-blooming Cereus*, two shorter pieces performed only months after *The Killdeer I* in 1960, mark quite a different line of experimentation in response to the same problem of moving Reaney's two-fold vision from the book to the theatre. And it is indeed something of an irony that Reaney comes closer to solving the problem of form in these two shorter dramatic pieces - the first a curtain raiser written in lieu of a poetry recital, the second a one-act opera libretto meant to be filled in by music - than he does in his early full-length work for the stage.

One-man Masque, for instance, dispenses completely with the limitations of a linear plot line and realistic set. The indoor set of *The Killdeer I* and *The Easter Egg* has been replaced by a bare stage with sixteen commonplace objects arranged in a circle around two mannequins. These objects and mannequins together come to represent the metaphysical kingdoms of Life and Death through which all men pass. This being the case, this simple circle of objects becomes a place where all human action and

identity can be portrayed, and is, by a single actor assuming a wide variety of roles throughout the course of the action. This flexibility in characterization is, in turn, made possible by the highly episodic nature of the masque, which allows the speaker to completely change his identity for another at the end of each segment. Besides making it possible for a single person to portray many in succession however, *One-man Masque*'s break with a linear plot line also presents a solution to the problem of portraying several disparate levels of reality in the same work. As in a mosaic, each episode has a separate and distinct reality of its own. Some, like the poetic passages function almost entirely on a metaphysical level, with a number of the poems, like "The Baby", "The Dwarf", "The Lost Child" and "Rachel", in particular evoking the image of Reaney's archetypal Child in its negative and positive forms. Other segments, like "Rocking-Chairs", "The Eaton's Catalogue", "A St. Hilda's Girl" and "Childhood" are wholely realistic in tone, building on the actual comments, writings and reminiscences of people. Still others, like "Adolescence" and "The Telephone" are delightfully humorous pieces of social satire. Each segment can portray only one level of reality at a time. However, again as in a mosaic, when all these separate realities are brought together and arranged into a common thematic pattern, they form a complex integrated whole,

a many-sided portrait of man's eternal passage through the kingdoms of life and death.

Night-blooming Cereus presents a second possible solution to the problems of mixing levels of reality. As with the three early full-length plays, it again resorts to the technique of a linear plot line and static indoor set. However, unlike these plays, *Cereus* works within the framework of a strong musical context, a context which in itself tends to put an audience in an intuitive, associative frame of mind more sensitive to the symbolic meanings working beneath the realistic level of the action. Like its companion piece, the highly poetic *Masque, Cereus* also relies dominantly on the creation of a series of evolving moods, images and impressions for its effect. That it does so and succeeds, in large part, to be the drama of evolving images that *The Easter Egg* fails to effectively become, can be traced to the fact that the strong emotional power of music flowing through the text *does* allow an audience "to follow the action on a conscious level" while becoming "psychically alerted by the images recurrent in the dialogue"[73] and melody alike to the mythic life of soul and spirit simultaneously unfolding within the realistic action.

The possibilities of music, multiple roles, non-linear action and a non-realistic set as solutions to Reaney's problem of dramatic form were hence present in

his work as early as 1960. Yet neither *The Easter Egg* nor *The Sun and the Moon*, Reaney's next two plays for adults, were really to employ these innovations. This suggests that Reaney himself was not yet aware of their potential value to his future dramaturgy.

What was needed then, was an impetus for Reaney to return to these earlier techniques, improve on them, and with their help, develop a dramatic form which would (a) allow him to express his Blakean/Jungian vision of the Archetypcal Child in such a way that his audience *would* realize they "were in a Child's world"[74] and (b) resolve the tension between the documentary and mythic pre-occupations in his art.

Through his dramatic work for and with children, he was to receive both that impetus and a dramatic form which would satisfy both needs.

Footnotes - Part One: The Early Plays

[1]James Reaney, (Editorial), *Alphabet* No. 2 (July, 1961) p.2.

[2]Ronald Huebert, "James Reaney: Poet and Dramatist", *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 13 (Winter, 1977) p.125-128.

[3]Alvin Lee, *James Reaney* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968) p. 114.

[4]Ibid., p. 118.

[5]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 59.

[6]James Reaney (Editorial), *Alphabet* No. 1 (September, 1960) p. 4.

[7]Alvin Lee, *James Reaney* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968) p. 113.

[8]Ibid., p. 114.

[9]Ibid., p. 115.

[10]James Reaney, "A Message to Winnipeg" in *Poems*, ed. Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 133.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 135.

[13]Alvin Lee, *James Reaney* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968) p. 115.

[14]Ibid., p. 116.

[15]The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a philistine as an "uncultured person, one whose interests are material and commonplace, whence philistinism".

[16]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* No. 1), in *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring 1976) p. 4.

[17]James Reaney, "James Reaney's Canada", *Macleans Magazine* No. 84 (December, 1971) p. 51.

[18]Ibid.

[19]The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines metaphysical as the "philosophy of being and knowing" with metaphysical refering to that which is "incorporeal; supernatural; visionary." To the extent that Reaney's myth of the Child *does* express a philosophy of what the human soul is and how it comes to know itself and its universe, it is certainly not inappropriate to refer to this myth as a form of metaphysics. This mythic aspect of Reaney's work further strengthens its claim to being metaphysical by the fact that it not only concerns itself with the essence and actions of the human soul and imagination - all "incorporeal" aspects of man - but stresses the importance of using one's spirituality to rise above or transform the "natural" world of material things.

[20]James Reaney, (Editorial), *Alphabet* No. 2 (July, 1961), p. 2.

[21]Alvin Lee, *James Reaney* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1968) p. 105.

[22]James Reaney, "The School Globe" in *Poems*, ed. Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 64.

[23]James Reaney, *A Suit of Nettles* in *Poems*, ed. Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 181.

[24]Ibid., p. 155.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 182.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Alvin Lee, *James Reaney* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1968) p. 125.

[29]James Reaney, *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* in *Poems*, ed. Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 230.

[30]Stan Draglund, "James Reaney's 'Pulsating Dance In and Out Forms' " in *The Human Elements*, ed. David Helwig (Canada: Oberon Press, 1978) p. 113.

[31]James Reaney, "An Evening with Babble and Doddle: Presentations of Poetry", *Canadian Literature* No. 19 (Spring, 1962) p. 38.

[32]Arlene Lorraine Fuhr, "An Archetypal Pattern in Reaney" unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta: Spring 1974) p. 86.

[33]Ibid., p.v.

[34]The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines expressionism as a "modern tendency among painters, dramatic authors, etc., to subordinate realism to the symbolic or stylistic expression of the artist's or character's inner experience."

[35]James Reaney, *The Killdeer* in *The Killdeer and Other Plays* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1962) p. 41-42.

[36]Ibid., p. 52.

[37]Ibid., p. 63.

[38]Ibid., p. 21.

[39]Ibid., p. 16.

[40]A comedy, in its simplest terms, is a play with a happy ending. In the case of Reaney's early drama, we may further elaborate on that definition by describing the first three full-length plays as romantic comedies. That is, they are plays in which the protagonists are sympathetically protrayed, and the action moves from an initial state of illusion, discord, and disorder to a final one of truth and harmony with the hostile elements either reconciled or removed from the world of the play. Thus also, the meaning of a comedic action or ending.

[41]Arlene Lorraine Fuhr "An Archetypal Pattern in Reaney" unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta: Spring, 1974) p.v.

[42]James Reaney, *The Killdeer* in *The Killdeer and Other Plays* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1962) p. 87.

[43]James Reaney, *Masks of Childhood* with afterword by Brian Parker (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 289.

[44]Julia Schneider, "Negative and Positive Elements in James Reaney's Plays", *Canadian Drama* Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 98-113.

[45]Louis Dudek, "A Problem of Meaning", *Canadian Literature* No. 59 (Winter, 1974) p. 28.

[46]Michael Tait, "The Limits of Innocence: James Reaney's Theatre", *Canadian Literature* No. 19 (Winter, 1964) p. 97.

[47]Louis Dudek, "A Problem of Meaning", *Canadian Literature* No. 59 (Winter, 1974) p. 20-21.

[48]Ross G. Woodman, *James Reaney* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971) p. 48.

[49]Geraldine Anthony, ed., *Stage Voices* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1978) p. 156.

[50]James Reaney, *Masks of Childhood* with afterword by Brian Parker (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p.vi.

[51]Ibid., p. 40.

[52]James Reaney, *The Easter Egg*, Ibid, p. 16.

[53]Ibid., p. 24.

[54]Brian Parker afterword, Ibid, p. 284-285.

[55]James Reaney, *The Easter Egg*, Ibid, p. 89.

[56]Ibid., p. 77.

[57]Ibid., p. 67.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid., p. 78.

[60]Ibid., p. 81.

[61]Ibid., p. 56.

[62]Ibid., p. 66.

[63]James Reaney, *The Sun and the Moon* in *The Killdeer and Other Plays* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1962) p. 92.

[64]Ibid., p. 135.

[65]Ibid., p. 144.

[66]Ibid., p. 145.

[67]Ibid., p. 164.

[68]Ibid., p. 163.

[69]Ibid., p. 92.

[70]Ibid., p. 132.

[71]James Reaney, *The Easter Egg* in *Masks of Childhood* with afterword by Brian Parker (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 3.

[72]Michael Tait, "The Limits of Innocence: James Reaney's Theatre", *Canadian Literature* No. 19 (Winter, 1964) p. 48.

[73]Ross Woodman, *James Reaney* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971) p. 48.

Part Two: The "Children's" Plays

Names and Nicknames (1963), *Let's Make a Carol* (1964), *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* (1964), *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965), *Apple Butter* (1965), *Listen to the Wind* (1966), *Three Desks* (1967), *Ignoramus* (1967), *Geography Match* (1967), *The Canada Tree* (1967), *Colours in the Dark* (1967), *Don't Sell Mr. Aesop* (1967), *Genesis* (1968), *The Killdeer II* (1970), *All the Bees and All the Keys* (1973)

> He seeks the innocent vision of a childhood perfected but his innocence and childhood itself have taken on different possibilities for him as he has taught himself to be a dramatist.[1]
>
> -Germaine Warkentin

I. Introduction

The years between 1963 and the close of the decade mark a greatly experimental period in Reaney's theatrical career. The documentary/myth pre-occupation first found in the poetry and carried into the early plays continues with variations through the plays of this second period as well. The form containing this double-focused vision, however, undergoes a startling amount of change and revision. Some of the plays written during this period, like *The Killdeer II* and *Three Desks*, mark the furthest extent of Reaney's experiments with realistic style and dialogue. Others, like *Listen to the Wind* and *Colours in the Dark*,

turn firmly away from naturalism, marking the rapid development of a distinctive "Reaney" style that was to reach its highest development in *The Donnellys* and continue with variations through the rest of his plays in the 1970's.

This extensive experimentation with form was, in turn, to rise in no small part from Reaney's increasing confidence and control over the practical as well as literary aspects of his dramaturgy. In "Ten Years at Play", Reaney mentions that many of the internal difficulties with the 1958 version of *The Sun and the Moon* arose from the fact that when he wrote it, he was "completely innocent of what actors, directors, producers could do. And might not be able to do."[2] Nor, he ruefully admits, was he that much wiser when the time came to stage the revised version eight years later:

> In 1965 Keith Turnbull started a summer theatre in London, Ontario; I was invited to submit a play, and to co-direct it, a totally new experience for me... My first time directing I found myself completely paralyzed. I did not know what to tell people, how to move, how to make things flow. Now I feel that given this kind of script the all-important person is the bookholder. I hardly knew there were such people; nor stage managers who took down blocking, nor producers who managed the casting, in short all the organization that lies behind even the least expensive amateur Little Theatre production.[3]

Yet, before the end of the decade, Reaney was to feel comfortable enough with the productional aspects of the theatre to begin demanding that they change to suit his own artistic vision.

The story of Reaney's dramaturgy between the years of 1963 and 1969 is hence one that encompasses not only significant changes in form but an evolving concept of directing, acting, rehearsal and theatre as well. And it is a story profoundly influenced on all levels by the intensive dramatic work Reaney was doing for and with children during this period.

Yet, it would be difficult to discuss either Reaney's drama for children or the effect of the latter on his plays for adults without a more extensive explanation of certain concepts and terms. One such concept is that of play, an activity closely associated with children yet of greater significance to the psychic and cultural life of the human race as a whole. Another such concept, building closely on the first, is that of children's drama in all its various manifestations. For, by understanding the philosophy, aims and methods of such genres as creative drama, children's theatre and puppetry, we not only come closer to understanding Reaney's own children's drama - which contains elements of all three forms - but how and why he was able to adapt so many aspects of his juvenile drama, including the preoccupation with play, to effective use in his adult plays.

II. The Concept of Play

For all that has been said about it, play remains an elusive faculty to define. Some scholars, following the basic thought of Karl Groos, Willaim McDougall and H.H. Carr, regard play as an instinct or innate impulse firmly fixed in the genes of all men.[4] Others, like Johan Huizinga feel that only the *tendency* to play is transmitted, with various environmental factors determining how and how much of that tendency is fulfilled.[5] Whether a child first begins to play because of instinctive motivation or environmental stimulation, however, most researchers seem to agree that play is an important personal and social activity.

Some scholars, like Groos and Hall see play mostly as a significant experience for the young. In *The Play of Animals* (1898) and *The Play of Man* (1901), Groos in particular develops the theory that the *raison d'etre* of childhood is to provide a period of play during which the organism can practice and prepare for adult activities and work. To this extent, play gives the young animal or human being opportunities to exercise and experiment with its body, senses, emotional and mental faculties and social role, in preparation for the serious business of adult living. Later psychoanalysts like J.A. Hadfield stress that the purpose of dreams and play alike is to imaginatively reproduce the strange or difficult in our

lives so we can attempt to resolve it. Play in particular, is important to the child because it allows him to endlessly repeat or try variations on a situation at his own rate and without the risk of having to try out all the alternatives in actuality; through doing this, he can effectively examine and work out many problems in his internal and external life.[6]

Still other scholars of the play phenomenon stress the importance of the play function in the lives of adults as well as children. Carr, for instance suggests in *The Survival of Play* (1902), that play can be a form of catharsis. That is, if people are allowed to release their pent-up hostilities or frustrations in the form of play, they are less likely to vent them in a destructive manner somewhere else. Guts Muths, Moritz Lazarus (*Die Reize des Spiels*, 1883) and G.T.W. Patrick (*The Psychology of Relaxation*, 1916) also suggest that adult play serves to recuperate man's mental and physical powers after heavy exertion. Defining play as activities which are "free and spontaneous and which are pursued for their own sake alone"[7] Patrick, in particular, suggests that because the higher mental processes of concentration, analysis and abstraction are fatiguing to adults, and undeveloped in children, the play activities of both tend to take the form of "old racial pursuits" employing "the more elemental

forms of mentality"[8] and larger muscles. Hadfield also lends credence to this idea in suggesting that there is indeed a sound physiological basis to the idea of dreams and play drawing upon "brain tracts that are old, well-worn and previous."[9] Since the most recently developed area of the brain (the cortical area) falls asleep first, it is left to the lower or thalmic areas, primarily the seat of feelings and emotions, to carry on mental activity. "Primitive thought (and that of the lower centres of the brain) is emotional, expresses itself in concrete symbols rather than words, works by sensations rather than ideas, and follows an associational rather than a logical order of events: dreams and play follow all these strictures."[10]

This, in turn, forms the basis of yet a third line of research into the function of play: play not only as an important facet in the individual lives of children and adults, but in the psychic life of the human race as a whole. For Freud, this animistic level of "primitive thought"[11] released during play or sleep contains "thinly disguised representations of certain fundamental unconscious fantasies common to all mankind."[12] This idea was developed by Jung into the theory of the collective unconscious, or the idea that the whole of mankind shares a universal subconscious. Formed out of that initial primitive phase of human thought, the collective unconscious embodies the basic universal experience of the

human psyche in equally universal symbols (or archetypes), which are organized, in turn, into certain fundamental patterns or stories called myths.[13]

If, as Freud suggests, both dreams and play are attempts of the conscious self to relate the subconscious to reality[14] then it is not surprising that dramatic play, and child's play in particular, have much the same content as that of the ancient myths, ritual and folklore rising from the dawn of man's conscious existence. In her book, *A Comparative Study of the Play Activities of Adult Savages and Civilized Children* (1910), L. Estella Appleton points out the similarities between the adult play of primitive tribes and American children between the ages of 7 and 15; while the children had a keener intellectual sensitivity and more specialized muscular control, the play of both contained "sensory elements", "rhythm", "mimicry", "dramatic representation", "skill", "practical judgement" and "individual competition."[15]

Similarly, educationalist Peter Slade, who has worked closely with children for over three decades, states:

> The constant repetitions and use of symbols in the realm of Child behaviour, also the acting out of situations sometimes before they can have been experienced, is entirely in line with the Jungian conception of the collective unconsciousness. We find story themes concerned with birth, marriage, parenthood, death and resurrection. All dolls and treasures are, in a manner, babies, weddings always come into Dramatic Play, as do mothers and fathers, and people who are killed

> but often get up again (resurrection). We also hear references to the hereafter and eternity, and at five years there is already apparent a certain recognition of good and evil, or at least of opposing forces.[16]

If Slade's book, *Child Drama* hints at the universal depths of human experience that play evokes for child and primitive man alike, Johan Huizinga's book, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1950) explores this same view of play at some depth. As Huizinga notes, the ritual play of primitive man is "essentially no different from one of the higher forms of common child-play or indeed animal-play."[17] Yet, that "rite, or 'ritual act'," in turn, "represents a cosmic happening."[18] He further elucidates by saying;

> At the great seasonal festivals the community celebrates the grand happenings in the life of nature by staging sacred performances, which represent the change of seasons, the rising and setting of the constellations, the growth and ripening of crops, birth, life and death in man and beast. As Leo Frobenius puts it, archaic man *plays* the order of nature as imprinted on his consciousness... And now he plays this great processional order of existence in a sacred play in and through which he actualizes anew or "recreates" the events represented and thus helps to maintain the cosmic order.[19]

Huizinga further goes on to speculate that this serious form of play is actually the starting point "of all social order and social institutions as well."[20] It is thus a grave fault of modern civilization that it has

forgotten how to play:

> The spirit of playful competition is, as a social impulse older than culture itself and pervades all life like a veritable ferment. Ritual grew up in sacred play; music and dancing were pure play. Wisdom and philosophy found expression in words and forms derived from religious contexts. The rules of warfare, the conventions of noble living were built up on play-patterns. We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come *from* play like a babe detaching itself from the womb; it arises *in* and *as* play, and never leaves it.[21]

There are, in short, many grounds for Richard Courtney's statement that:

> Dramatic patterns in games and rhymes make a direct appeal to the thought of the child because they evoke the elements of human nature - the primal opposition of light and dark, life and death; magic and the omnipotence of thought; animism and irrational connections and the identification of opposites. The residues of primitive rituals have compelling force within the mind of the modern child simply because they relate to the inherent dramatic patterns within all human beings.[22]

To conclude, play forms a particularly important activity in the lives of modern and primitive man alike.

For primitive man play was - and still is - an important means of transforming the chaos of the universe and the psyche into something both knowable and controllable. From the attempt to strike order out of the chaos of human experience came the myths and archetypes of the collective unconscious which resides in the minds of all men even today. And out of the "playful" expression and

exploration of the world thus mythically perceived, came religion, the social and fine arts, and the sciences; in short, civilization and culture.

For modern man, play, in the form of sports, athletics, dancing and similar activities, serves as a safety valve for primitive instincts and emotions potentially dangerous to the self and society. Similarly, adult play allows the "higher" brain with its exhausting functions of abstract and conceptual thought to relax and recuperate, by activating in its place certain basic brain patterns shared by children and primitive man alike.

Seen in this context, children and their play activities become a particularly important bridge between primitive and modern man. Drawing, like ancient man, on thought processes which are largely symbolic, emotional and associative in nature, children also turn to play as a means of understanding and coping with the strange, unfamiliar world beyond and within them. As it does with culture, play similarly impells a child towards maturity through allowing it to exercise and develop the full range of its physical, mental, emotional and social skills. Yet, if play helps bring children to a healthy adulthood, it can also restore adults to a healthy "childhood." That is, by allowing the modern adult to temporarily return to the simpler thought processes of his childhood - and through that, of primitive man - play

gives him a much-needed rest from the complex task of being a modern man in a modern society.

III. Children's Drama

A. Creative Drama

Dreams, it must be admitted, perform much the same function in children and adults as play does. In fact, much of psychoanalysis is based on the idea that many of the difficulties that go repressed or unacknowledged in the conscious life of man are explored during sleep in the primitive yet universal dream-language of myth and archetype.

Yet, where dreams, belonging to the realm of the unconscious, are generally beyond the direct control of man, this is not true of play which is a function of his waking hours. And creative, or Child drama, is built on the assumption that the natural power of play so vital to the spiritual, physical and social growth of children, can indeed be skillfully harnessed to intensify its beneficial effects on the young human being. To quote Billi Tyas:

> "drama comes from the Greek word "dran" or "to do"... In the element of instinct it is natural for the child to do - to play; children play with things then play being things. By using this unlearned tendency - this instinct - we can lead the child to experience the dramas of life, and through his participation in

> channelled dramatic play, the way is opened for him to discover his world and his own self; he is also able to experiment for himself with the proportions and harmony essential for living his life.[23]

Dramatic play, the particular form of play creative drama builds on, has been defined as "play which contains impersonation and/or identification".[24] For the "very young child" who is constantly "imitating the action and character traits of those around him," it is the primary means through which "he explores his universe and himself".[25] It is also one of the main means through which "the child develop[s] from a purely egocentric being into a person capable of sharing and give and take."[26] For, he generally enacts these various roles and situations from his real or imaginary world with such a high level of physical, mental and emotional involvement that he in a strong sense "lives" them. This, tied in with the fact that much child play is social in nature, thus necessitating co-operation with others, leads the child to experience perspectives and viewpoints different from his own.

Creative drama tries to ensure both the continuance and "the proper exercise and control"[27] of this intense level of play throughout the formative years of childhood and early adolescence. For by doing so, creative dramatists like Slade, Way, McCaslin, and Ward feel they

can help produce, in Slade's words, "a happy and balanced individual"[28] who relates well to himself and the world around him.

Creative drama has been variously described by its practitioners as an educational tool, "a medium of expression" and a "creative art."[29] Regardless of name or label, however, it is in all cases improvisatory allowing for as free and spontaneous a flow of play as possible. This does not mean that the play activity is uncontrolled or unstructured. Some exercises may aim at increasing the participants' emotional and intellectual awareness of a particular subject, mood or aspect of human behavior; still others, may aim at increasing sensory awareness, or the comfortable and graceful use of the body. Yet, even where general plans are made in advance, with the more complex exercises being shaped around a definite beginning, climax and conclusion, detailed action and dialogue are left to the children; lines are not written down or memorized, nor does the action follow a strictly regular or preconceived pattern. As Winifred Ward notes, "whether the story is original or derived from literature and history, it is played or improvised spontaneously."[30]

Moreover, in contrast to conventional theatre, creative drama is strictly participant-oriented. Some practitioners, like Slade, strictly prohibit an audience

before the age of twelve;[31] others, like Ward, feel that only a small invited audience of informed and familiar observers should be allowed.[32] In either case, the emphasis lies on the dramatic process and the benefits thus to be derived by the child participants, not on a carefully conceived and finished production for an audience's enjoyment.

B. Children's Theatre

Children's theatre can be defined as "formal productions for children's audiences, whether acted by amateurs or professionals, children or adults, or a combination of both."[33] In contrast to creative drama in which everyone is an actor, children's theatre is definitively audience-oriented. Even here, however, creative drama has made inroads in the form of the "participation play" developed and made popular by Brian Way in the late fifties and early sixties. Although formal, written theatre, it shares creative drama's emphasis on (a) few props, simple costumes and a bare open playing area, (b) carefully suiting content and length to the physical, mental and emotional level of the children involved, and (c) giving children (in this case, the young audience) the opportunity to participate actively and spontaneously in the development and perhaps even resolution of the ongoing action.

Although the play influence is not so direct or obvious in non-participatory children's theatre, it nonetheless exists. As noted children's writer Dennis Lee states, good children's literature is a unique fusion of the adult wisdom and integrity "which has had the chance to *be* integrity because it has been tested so many times," and the "child's capacity for play."[34] The result should be "the kind of simplicity which occasionally comes into being on the other side of complexity," a "distillation or unification of experience".[35] In short, it may be true that many "significant realizations...can be evoked in a ten year old or six year old child" and that children's theatre, no less than adult theatre, should try to put its audience into contact with "the universal depths of human experience which have to be evoked not taught."[36] However, it is also important that the writer of children's plays have a firm contact with the child within himself to know how and in what terms "these significant realizations"[37] can be best revealed to a young audience.

Thus, the play element in children's theatre is important, though the latter's methods are somewhat different from those of creative drama. Both aim at the betterance of the child, but there is a greater emphasis in theatre on achieving it through artistic presentation rather than children's participation. Ross and Paterson

state the viewpoint of non-participatory children's theatre quite well in their preface to *The Popcorn Man*:

> ...we never ask our audience to create the play for us by pretending they are trees or waves or walls, or by deciding how the play shall end. These techniques are invaluable in the "creative drama" situation of classroom or workshops, but we feel the theatre is neither a classroom nor a workshop - it is a unique artistic experience in which the audience and the players have their separate and distinct roles.[38]

C. Puppetry

Children's theatre, though important in itself, is only one small part of the whole genre of theatre. Similarly, puppet plays for children constitute but one small area of an ancient and greatly varied art form. Yet, with the rapid rise of children's drama over the course of the twentieth century,[39] puppetry has been adapted so successfully to the purposes of entertaining and educating children that its function as adult theatre has been pushed largely into the background.[40]

The secret of puppetry's inherent appeal to young people in many ways rests in the puppet itself: an inanimate object, usually in the generalized shape of a living being, manipulated into dramatic life by a human operator. This puppet may assume any variety of forms, including that of the glove puppet (a puppet worn on and manipulated by the hand and fingers), the marionette

(a puppet worked by strings or wires), the hand-and-rod puppet (a combination of the marionette and the glove puppet), the shadow puppet (a flat figure held against a translucent screen to project a silhouette on the audience's side) and the mask-and-costume puppet (a puppet containing the entire body of the actor). However, in all cases, the magic of the puppet lies in the transformation of dead material into a living being suffused with human spirit and significance. It is a magic that immensely appeals to that basic, animistic level of human thought, shared by children and primitive man alike, which naturally endows inanimate objects and natural phenomena alike with a living soul. And this living soul that children accept so readily and wholly as the puppet's, is in turn a projection of their own as well as the puppeteer's essential humanity. As Dezsö Szilogyi, Director of the Budapest Theatre states:

> The history of mythology teaches us that long ago the puppet was the symbol of the gods and the dead, and was used only later to represent man-in-action. Psychologists maintain that the puppet is nothing other than the symbol of man himself. The puppet therefore, no matter in what form it may appear, is, deep down in the human mind, a primordial symbol of the human being. In certain human communities it is rooted in the so-called collective unconscious; it never penetrates to the level of the conscious mind, but when it emerges it always induces the same emotions and reactions among individuals of that community.[41]

Not being a man itself, the puppet is less suited than living actors to the naturalistic presentation of human characters and action. Yet by virtue of being by definition an abstraction or generalization of a man, it is infinitely well-suited to portraying the quintessence of human nature and experience. For instance, by being able to simplify the human face and figure to several bold, distinctive features, the puppet can be made to portray not merely a greedy, stupid, or heroic person, but the very essence of human greed, stupidity or heroism. Similarly, the form of the puppet can be modified even further to effectively produce such emanations of the human imagination as witches, dragons, fairies and nature spirits. In both capacities, the puppet is aided by the kind of actions it tends to perform best; the bold, simple motions of the glove puppet, and the airy leaps, flights and floatings of the marionette may have limited application in the realm of the naturalistic, but they are an asset in protraying man in the light of the mythic, the fantastical, or the satiric.

In short, the puppet itself appeals to that basic level of human thought sensitive to archetypes and myths because it also condenses the complex depths of human nature and experience into a generalized symbolic form. To quote Sergei Obraztsov:

> A puppet coming alive is not just a trick, it is a character being born. And if we know that these characters must not imitate man - that is, that they must not be a model of the human body and the human mind but must condense, synthesize, all that is essential and characteristic in the various features of human nature - then we understand why from the collision of these characteristics something is created with a new and wider meaning to which our hearts respond with deep emotion.[42]

Yet it is a certain "something" to which many contemporary adults are less sensitive than children. The reason for this may be to some extent found in the particular genres - fantasy, myth, legend, satire, folk and fairytale - to which puppetry adapts itself well. For, with the possible exception of satire, all these forms appeal to a certain symbolic, associative level of thought more quickly accessible to the "playful" mind of the child and primitive man than that of "the very conscious, rational, and critically-minded adult."[43] In any case, notes Szilagyi, the most successful ventures into modern puppet theatre for adults have been those which have not only expressed "the peculiarities of the puppet in appropriate aesthetic forms", but drawn upon "the adult's childhood memories."[44] In short, the task of the puppeter writing or performing for adults and children both is similar to that of the writer of children's theatre: the verities he expresses may be serious and universal; but he must be sensitive enough

to the child within himself to be able to communicate with the child, or "child dormant in every adult,"[45] for whom these verities are meant.

IV. The Listener's Workshop

With a fuller understanding of both the nature of play and of children's drama in general, it is now appropriate to move on to Reaney's own work with children. The latter consists of both improvisatory workshops of the creative drama type, and children's theatre of the conventional, participatory and puppet varieties. As such, many of the tenets which apply to the three categories of children's drama discussed, also apply to Reaney's children's drama. Yet, having said that, it must also be said that in many cases, these same basic features have been strongly shaped by and adapted to suit Reaney's own particular artistic vision and purposes.

This is particularly true of the improvisatory workshops which began during the rehearsal period for *Listen to the Wind;* in Reaney's words, "our rehearsals in the summer of 1966 had really been workshops."[46] From people in the cast who wanted to continue with this form of improvisatory activity came The Listener's Workshop which, by Alvin Lee's account, began in the Green Room of the Grand Theatre in London, Ontario in November, 1966. In March of 1967, the Alpha Centre was founded by

Reaney and his Satyrday School students as a "workshop for all the arts."[47] Situated on the top floor of the Market Drug Store, it had "an extremely primitive theatre without a stage and without lights but seating up to sixty persons in a manner that created little or no separation from the actors."[48] As to the activities taking place in this drug store theatre, Reaney comments in Alphabet 13 (June, 1967):

> Here Listener's Workshop has been meeting with its new kind of play theatre - children and young people pretending to be mirrors, chromosomes, marionettes, trees, rivers - the Victorian Boat Disaster... trying right now to write a play history of their London, Ont. called *Antler River*, the Indian name for the Thames River.[49]

A history of one of the oldest streets in London which was acted as the Workshop participants marched down the street, may have been either *Antler River* in its final form, or a Workshop production related to it. About *Genesis*, which also evolved from the Workshop and reached production in March, 1968, our information is more specific. To judge by Reaney's own description in "Ten Years at Play", of *Genesis*'s production, this Alpha Centre play was essentially a scenario linking together a series of improvisational sequences which had been built around stories and images from the first book of the Bible. In best creative drama fashion, this scenario provides a

general plan for the participants to follow while leaving specifics of dialogue and action to the children's imagination. These specifics, notes Reaney in the same article, could often change extensively from group to group with each finding a different way of expressing such concepts as the creation of the sun or of birds. He concludes:

> There are certainly disadvantages to the no-script evolvement of plays, but one thing they do is to force people to remember, and where memory fails to make it up again new.[50]

It is possible that there is no published script for *Don't Sell Mr. Aesop* (1967) or *The Canada Tree* (1967) because they too may have taken the form of improvisatory scenarios. Yet, based on textual evidence and documentation, it would appear that even the published plays of this period - *Listen to the Wind, Geography Match, Colours in the Dark, Three Desks, The Killdeer II* - were strongly influenced by the "Workshop's no-script evolvement of plays"[57] with children. It is also on record that some of Reaney's first dramatic experiments with his Donnelly research material again took place at Alpha Centre.

Though the latter was closed in 1969 due, in Reaney's words, to a "lack of money and energy"[52] the three short years the Listener's Workshop was in operation were particularly important ones in terms of Reaney's development as a playwright. It is therefore appropriate to

delve a little more deeply into the Workshop's aims and methods. In terms of form, the activities at Alpha Centre seem to have borne a strong resemblance to those of creative drama. And while it is true that Reaney himself denies having had any knowledge of the work of people like Slade, Way or Ward until he was well into his own dramatic activities, it is also true that he nonetheless has spoken favourably of creative drama in the context of his own theatrical aims. Certainly, having based his Workshop activities on the same power of dramatic play as creative drama, it would hardly be surprising if Reaney, quite on his own, did arrive at methods similar to those of earlier creative drama pioneers. For, in its emphasis on a participant rather than spectator-centered drama, on an essentially bare playing area, and on improvisational exercises designed to imaginatively stimulate the participants' physical, mental and emotional senses, Reaney's Listener's Workshop can be seen as being in close accord with the means of creative drama.

The Workshop can also be seen to share something of the latter's ends to the extent that both forms of drama utilize play for the purposes of guiding the participants to a better understanding of themselves and the world around them. Yet it is precisely in this use of play - or rather, in each form's differing perception of what the main function of play is - that the difference between

creative drama and Reaney's improvisational children's drama becomes most clear.

The connection between the archetypal play that builds myths and cultures, and the personal play which builds people certainly does not go unacknowledged by creative drama practitioners. McCaslin, noting that "in every period of history, play has served a significant purpose, interpreting and affecting the lives of the people" suggests that "the young child" much like "primitive man"... expresses his feeling through movement and words, creating more complex situations as he grows older, with the boundaries stretched but the rules clearly established."[53] And Slade echoes Courtney when he comments on child play possessing "simple, outward expression of vast, inward vision."[54] Nor are children's theatre and puppetry, which are based on the play of the imagination if not the body, unaware of the link between primitive cultures and children. To this extent, all these branches of children's drama make extensive use, either through written plays or improvisational exercises, of the child's receptiveness to myths and fairytales, his sensitivity to the symbolic, associational language of music and poetry, and his interest in games and choral chants, many of which hearken back to ancient cultural patterns and needs.

Reaney's work for children, be it of the written or improvised variety, also employs many of these traits that

connect the personal play of the child to the mythic play of primitive man. Yet, there is a crucial difference in emphasis. For the creative dramatist and the children's theatre practitioner alike, the anthropological aspect of child's play is regarded largely as an illuminating sidelight, or immensely useful tool to the main purpose of producing a happy, well-developed or well-entertained child; in short, myth, metaphor and poetry are means to an end.

For James Reaney, however, myth, metaphor and poetry are extremely important ends in themselves forming, as they do, the key to man's spiritual survival in a materialistic world. Like Huizinga, Reaney would agree that:

> Living myth knows no distinction between play and seriousness. Only when myth has become mythology, that is, literature borne along as traditional lore by a culture which has in the meantime more or less outgrown the primitive imagination, only then will the contrast between play and seriousness apply to myth - and to its detriment.[55]

It is clear from such articles of Reaney's as "'Towards the Last Spike': the Treatment of a Western Subject", "The Canadian Imagination" and "A Letter from James Reaney" that the playwright believes very strongly in both the "living myth" and "the primitive imagination";[56] that modern man, no less than his ancestors finds the

source of his being and identity through constructing myth out of the materials he finds in and around himself. Thus, the importance of the child, whose "world of metaphor"[57] and play brings it closely in touch with the imaginative processes of the primitive mind. Thus also Reaney's demand that his modern adult audiences recognize in his Child protagonists, both the essential child within themselves and their similar need to strive towards the spiritual maturity of Childhood fulfilled.

Seen in this context, the Listener's Workshop appears as a particularly bold attempt on Reaney's part to enact his Child-centred artistic vision in the documentary realm of men as well as the metaphoric sphere of poetry or theatre. As such, play is utilized not merely as a means of helping children become healthy modern adults, nor adults to simply relax or release pent up feelings. Rather, it becomes for Reaney's purposes the channel through which both the child and the child-within the man can be guided back to that initial myth-and-metaphor making frame of mind which can transform the hostile world itself into something human and familiar. As Ross Woodman notes in his critical study, *James Reaney:*

> Reaney in London became more and more interested in children's theatre. Such a theatre, he believed, should not and need not exclude adults. The Children's theatre he had in mind, therefore, was a children's theatre for adults... Reaney had

> hoped to make his *Listener's Workshop* a true image of the London community, a place where its psychic life could be acted out even as Owen in *Listen to the Wind* dreams it out. Children, rather than adolescents and young adults, gravitated toward it because they were less inhibited, were still in possession of a world of metaphor. For Reaney, metaphor is man's birthright, a gift bestowed which like Wordsworth's "celestial light" is gradually and inevitably lost. To recover it it is necessary to strip away those delusions of common sense that would persuade men that imagination is the father of lies. Those who have suffered most from the delusions of common sense - the psychically wounded members of society, park drunks, petty thieves, addicts of various sorts - would be welcomed, to the Workshop and in that "bare room over the Drug Store they would be invited to improvise a lost world in the hope of meeting some identity-conferring image of themselves.[58]

Reaney's emphasis on the seriousness of play in the lives of adults and children alike, and his consequent interest in building, through the Workshop, "a children's theatre" which "should not and need not exclude adults"[59] may help explain the extremely close bond between Reaney's improvisational children's drama and much of his adult theatre. For, by allowing Reaney to work out the mythic/documentary vision of the poetry and early drama in the concrete dramatic terms of child's play, the Workshop played an important role in his evolvement of a "playful" productional, rehearsal and stylistic method better suited to the expressing of his Child-centred vision. As he, himself notes:

> I didn't really know how they [his plays] should be done until about ten years ago, when I started working with amateurs here in London, and doing workshops with children and young people.[60]

Yet, it was the earlier written children's work, like *Names and Nicknames* and *Apple Butter* which first alerted the playwright to the possibilities of make-believe and a "playful" form of dramaturgy. Moreover, it is in the Workshop-influenced plays of *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match* that one can see most clearly the effect of the improvisational sessions on the evolving technique and style of the adult drama.

It is therefore to Reaney's written children's theatre - and its sophisticated extension, the adult drama - that we will turn in the next section of the thesis.

V. The Plays

The best children's theatre, as earlier mentioned, tends to be that which expresses the maturity and insight of the adult through the simpler, more "playful" means of the child. Since Reaney's adult theatre aims at a similar goal, it is not surprising that his children's theatre should have much to reveal about the former.

Most of Reaney's children's theatre was written during the dramaturgically critical years between 1963 and 1968. The published work includes *Names and Nicknames* (1963), a participatory play; *Let's Make a Carol: A Play with Music for Children* (1964); *Apple Butter* (1965), a marionette play; *Ignoramus* (1967) and *Geography Match*

(1967), two non-participatory plays; and *All the Bees and All the Keys* (1973), another play with music for children. Unpublished to date are *The Canada Tree* (1967), *Don't Sell Mr. Aesop* (1967), *Genesis* (1968) and two marionette plays *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* (1964) and *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965).

Of the published, and therefore most readily accessible of this children's work, the influence of *Let's Make a Carol* and *All the Bees and All the Keys* is probably the most difficult to assess. Certainly, the sensitivity of children to sound, rhythm and music must have been one deciding factor in Reaney's decision to return to the emotional, associative language of music first experimented in *Cereus*, as a partial solution to the problem of form. And, as musical plays for children, *Carol* and *Bees* certainly do reflect Reaney's increasing use of folksongs and music in his adult plays from *Listen to the Wind* onwards, as a form of emotional subtext or even as a Wagnerian system of *leit-motifs*. However, Reaney was already well into this line of musical experimentation before *Bees* was written in 1973. And *Names and Nicknames* (1963) reveals experiments with spoken antiphony and counterpoint which predate even *Carol*.

In fact, it may be said that *Names and Nicknames* together with the other three plays forming the collection *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* are the

best indication to date of the effect that Reaney's children's theatre has had on his adult drama. As James Stewart Reaney comments:

> The collection *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* offers the most basic approach to the kind of theatre James Reaney wants to develop. These four plays use the characteristic pre-occupations and structures of his drama on a reduced scale, allowing an entry into his other work through their simpler forms.[61]

Although Reaney himself admits that all these plays helped teach him "what you could do with a freer unrealistic style"[62] they did not all contribute the same lesson. In fact, these four plays actually constitute at least three different lines of experimentation.

Names and Nicknames (1963) represents an important line of pre-Workshop experimentation that led directly to the writing of *Listen to the Wind* (1966), the first of the adult plays "in a freer unrealistic style."[63] *Ignoramus* (1967) and *Geography Match* (1967) together represent a second, Workshop-influenced line of experimentation; building in part on techniques from the first line, this second line found its first fruits in *Colours in Dark* (1967).

Yet a third line of experimentation occurring chronologically between the other two is embodied in *Apple Butter* (1965), a marionette play representing a line of experimentation in puppetry that was to leave a

particularly strong mark on *Colours in the Dark* (1967), *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) (1975), *Baldoon* (1977), and *The Dismissal* (1978). Unlike the other two lines of experimentation which flow rather naturally into each other, this third, by reason of belonging to a significantly different branch of children's theatre, is rather distinct in itself. As such, it will be examined separately from the others.

Apple Butter is actually representative of a whole group of marionette plays including the unpublished *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp* (1964) and *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965) which Reaney wrote for children between 1963 and 1965. *Apple Butter*, the only one of the trio to be published to date was commissioned for children attending the Western Fair at London, Ontario in September, 1965. Yet, like much of Reaney's other children's work, this marionette play holds important solutions to the problem of form in the adult drama. As with *Night-blooming Cereus* (and indeed, all the early plays except *One-man Masque*) *Apple Butter* follows a linear plot line placed in a static set:

> Scene: *The yard of Miss Pinch's farmhouse in southwestern Ontario, about 1890. Her house has a gable with a pointed window; an elm tree almost screens a watering trough and a large bank barn.*[64]

Yet, what music does for *Cereus* in helping it to communicate two levels of reality at once, puppetry does for *Apple Butter*.

Like *The Killdeer I*, *The Sun and the Moon* and *The Easter Egg*, *Apple Butter* begins in a satiric style that is fairly realistic. Yet, by virtue of being caricatures of the Old Maid and the Mean Schoolmaster, rather than a specific maiden lady or teacher portrayed by a real actor, both Hester Pinch and Solomon Spoilrod can afford to act and speak in a much more bold, humorously exaggerated manner without straining credibility. At the same time, this level of heightened, caricatured social reality, by reason of its essential rather than naturalistic quality, hints at the fantastical nature of the action to come. The same could also be said of the appearance of Apple Butter himself. For while the satiric/social level of the dialogue does not really change upon his arrival, the visual level of the action instantly shifts to a more metaphorical level. "*Made of apple wood*" with a "*peg nose, auger drilled eyes, raffia hair*"[65] he is, in himself a humorous rebuttal of the prosaic Miss Pinch's earlier assertion that her strange charge's name *must* be Paul Butter because not even an orphan could have as outlandish a name as Apple Butter. Cued in by the physical fact of his very substance (apple wood), an audience is

much more likely to believe the new puppet's own assertion that his name is to the contrary, an entirely suitable one since he is like the sweet, brown essence of "all the apples in the orchard rolled into one barrel "[66] and crushed into apple butter. Thus, Pinch, Spoilrod and Nipchopper (the hired man who enters the scene after Apple Butter) being spiritually obtuse, may continue to treat and speak of Apple Butter solely as a strange but naughty orphan boy to be whipped at will. However, the audience is already visually alerted to the fact that both Apple Butter and the natural world he to some extent represents, have hidden powers and meanings yet to be revealed to the narrow-minded adults of the play.

By functioning on the visual level as a kind of nature spirit, and on the aural, in dialogue with his elders, as a representative child trying to escape the cruel whims of adult behavior through its wits and imagination, Apple Butter performs an important transitional link between the opening satirical/social level of the play and the fantastical level that comes to dominate the action. Certainly Apple Butter's stylized applewood figure helps pave the way for even more abstract and symbolic figures as Treewuzzel "*a tree fairy made of old pieces of wood picked up in the bush*" and Rawbone "*a bone fairy, made out of cattle bones for arms and legs.*"[67] As totally metaphorical creatures embodying

respectively, the spirit of "all wooden things"[68] and "all things bony"[69] they are under no obligation to conform to the standards of naturalistic human behaviour; nor is Moo Cow, an anthropomorphic bovine "*flat, wooden, white with a black map of Canada on one side suggesting Holstein markings*"[70] who also befriends Apple Butter. As such, this trio's efforts on their friend's behalf can become as bold, extravagant and magical as Reaney desires without straining the credibility of either the characters or the action. For instance, when the three adults, one after another try to beat Apple Butter with their wooden switches, they each are beaten offstage by a huge wooden sppon, "*a really gigantic wooden spoon demolish[ing] the HIRED MAN.*"[71] A second attempt, this time with whalebone brushes ends equally disastrously:

> *A huge whalebone brush enters and chases them about. MOO COW enters and bears VICTOR [NIPCHOPPER] off on her horns.*[71]

"*She and VICTOR disappear up*"[73] as Moo Cow fulfills her threat to jump over the moon with him. This leaves Spoilrod and Miss Pinch to apologize for their unpleasant adult habit of beating children without cause, and to be rehabilitated further through a marriage arranged by Apple Butter.

As in the early comedies, this impending marriage is more an expression of a metaphysical truth, than a

naturalistic mating of two people. In fact, Apple Butter's means of besting then impelling his elders to marry, is far more unbelievable in a "real" sense, than Bethel's bat-killing method of besting George and impelling him to become engaged to her. Yet, there is a crucial difference. The fact that George and Bethel are flesh-and-blood human beings performing in a realistic setting is in itself enough to help pull their metaphoric behaviour into an inappropriately realistic context. By contrast, Apple Butter and his fellow "actors" being in themselves metaphors of human behaviour and experience, are well adapted to communicating the metaphoric level of the action to an audience. Because of Apple Butter's own consistent physical identification with apples and his close association with Treewuzzel and Rawbone, the embodied spirits of the fauna and flora of the natural world, there is no doubt that in yielding to Apple Butter's sometimes ungentle persuasion, Pinch and Spoilrod are, in fact, literally giving in to the natural spirit of love, fertility and growth necessary to human life.

The puppet, with its natural ability to express, through its very appearence, the mythic or metaphoric essence of a character, and to perform, with technical ease the most bold, extravagant and magical of actions was to offer one solution to Reaney's problem of form. In the early plays, the metaphysical reality of the action

and characters is often blurred by the presence of a realistic parlouroom set, and the demand that flesh-and-blood actors simultaneously conform to the documentary world of actual men as well as the mythic realm of the Child who embodies the essential experience of man. In his later plays, like *Colours in the Dark, The Dismissal, Baldoon* and *Handcuffs,* Reaney uses puppets or puppet-like techniques as a form of mythic shorthand, a method of swiftly and sharply registering on the audience's consciousness (or perhaps even unconsciousness), the presence of a strong metaphorical level of reality at work in the characters and the action of the play. As with the genre of puppetry in general, these techniques demand in turn a certain associative, symbolic frame of mind natural to primitive men, children and, if not totally stifled by modern adult rationality and common sense, the child-within-the-man. Since it is precisely to this child-within-the-man that Reaney's adult plays try to appeal, it is not surprising that Reaney has kind words for the puppet's ability to return audiences to a more imaginative state of mind. However, he cautions that they must be puppets so simple or suggestive in form that they demand the imagination to complete them, rather than "beautiful realistic ballerina puppets with six manipulators on each toe all for the effect of a 'real' dancer."[74] As

he notes in "A Letter From James Reaney":

> my own marionettes for *Apple Butter* are roughly made because I'm no Junior League seamstress, can't carve wood but also because I'm quite content with the resultant primitive effect which all the money in the world can't buy so far as forcing the viewer to complete my work for me is concerned... I prefer the imaginative dividends which I think the anti-realist approach of such a puppeteer as Chris Harley (Manitoba Theatre Centre) gives you.[75]

However, the reaction of the adult segment of the audience to *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965), another marionette play, seems to suggest that while puppetry, with its innate ability to simplify reality "so ruthlessly that you have to get in there and create yourself"[76] is indeed valuable to Reaney's artistic aims, it did not contain the whole solution to the problem of form in Reaney's adult drama:

> In our *Red Riding Hood*, Greg Curnoe designed the Granny as a yellow tin teapot - *object trouve* - and when she spoke her lid wagged; children shrieked with joy at this; their parents, deep sunk in what Blake calls the Pit of Ulro, usually walked out in a huff.[77]

What was needed was the development of yet more, and more effective methods of getting adult audiences - and indeed, adult actors themselves - back into touch with the child within themselves. Reaney's live children's theatre was to supply many of these methods and at last really make

possible, a children's theatre for adult audiences.

Names and Nicknames, representing the first line of experimentation in children's theatre also seems to aim at a ruthless simplification of reality that will force the viewer to imaginatively complete what he sees. Yet, by virtue of attempting to reach this goal with live actors rather than puppets, this early play's experimentation with form had a much more direct and significant application to the live adult theatre that followed.

In "Ten Years at Play", Reaney mentions that it was a performance by the Peking National Opera in 1961 that first got him thinking about writing "a different kind of play...where it's all rapids."[77] Yet the fact that his next play was *The Easter Egg* (1962), another work in the early linear style, seems to suggest that until *Names and Nicknames* (1963) Reaney was not sure of how to translate this ambition into practical stage terms consistent with his own Child-centered vision. It is a suggestion reinforced by Reaney's own comment, again in "Ten Years at Play" that it was only after writing *Names* with its "bare stage, just words and you approach" that "I was ready to write a script so odd that nobody seemed willing to chance it, and I had to direct it myself - *Listen to the Wind.*"[78] Since *Wind* led in turn to "all the rest of recent activities - the Listener's Workshop... embryonics for *Colours* and *Donnelly*,"[80] there is no

reason to doubt Reaney's comment in "A Letter From James Reaney" that *Names and Nicknames* was actually the starting point of that "ten year span"[81] of experimentation that was to culminate in the distinctive style of *The Donnellys*.

In speaking of that ten year period, Reaney further comments that it is "important to remember that a great deal of this involved activity with kids."[82] And it is of no small significance that most of the stylistic changes introduced by *Names and Nicknames* were made possible by the introduction into the cast list of a chorus "of at least six children"[83] (there were twenty-one used in the first performance). With their natural ability to make-believe and pretend with uninhibited speed and fluidity, their sensitivity to sound, and even their connection with the mythic and fantastical elements of the human psyche, these children played a strong role in severing the Gordian knot of Reaney's early dramaturgy.

It was, admittedly, a knot already cut to some depth by *Masque*. In fact, with its manner of playing freely with realistic time and space, dependence on an espisodic rather than linear advancement of the action, and allowance of actor(s) and objects both to take on a number of identities, *Names* seems to mark a return to a number of techniques first exploited in *Masque*. However, the presence of the children's chorus marks the crucial difference between these two plays. In *Masque*, the actor

is still tied to a static set of sixteen objects leaving him with a strong dependence on the spoken rather than acted word; there is simply not enough space as he moves from object to object to give much acting room per vignette. Moreover, the sixteen objects in *Masque* often contribute only a mildly suggestive or associative value to the words and action of each scene. Having been told which objects belong to life and which belong to death, for example, we know that the speaker is still in Death's kingdom when he stops by the dresser; nonetheless the object itself has little relevance to the Doomsday poem read there. In short, while *Masque*, as a poetic exercise, works, much as play does on a symbolic, associational and emotional level, it lacks the same fluidity, exuberant action and identity-conferring use of imagination distinctive to child play. *Names*, possessing all of the latter through its child's chorus, is able to rise above the stylistic limitations posed even by *Masque*, and convert many of the same techniques to better use.

For instance, the essentially bare stage of *Masque* has been made even more bare in *Names;* even the circle of suggestive objects has been removed, leaving only a movable stepladder. Yet, in this greater barreness, lies even greater richness as imaginary setting after imaginary setting sweeps unhindered onto the stage, then dissolves fluidly into the next under the impetus of the storyline

and the imaginative play of actors and audience alike. As Reaney notes in the preface to *Names:*

> This play was written with a bare stage in mind; all the stage setting can be accomplished with words, pantomime, the human body, music from the rhythm band instruments, the audience themselves...all the time keeping in mind the insistent rhythm and flow of the storyline.[84]

This new emphasis on the imaginative use of sound and mime is as important as the more barren stage. For, if the fluidity of child's play breaks the earlier static sets' restriction of action by allowing for the swift passage across the stage of a large number of scenes widely varied in environment, time and mood, the child's sensitivity to sound, and ability to role play ensure that each scene is brought to vivid identity and life before it flows into the next.

The significance of both innovations to Reaney's dramaturgy can be summed up in the way that country life, both human and natural, is treated in *Names* as opposed to its treatment in the earlier plays. Delegated to a few descriptive passages in *The Easter Egg* and *The Killdeer I*, or the odd character from the community transversing the stage in *The Sun and the Moon*, this life explodes in *Names* into bustling aural and visual life on stage.

The barnyard sequence near the beginning of the play is a particularly apt example of this. The chorus of

children (and spare actors) becoming rapidly, in turn, mooing cows being driven to milking, a turning cream separator, a herd of happily feeding pigs (one of which makes a comic bolt for freedom before being caught by Rob) and a couple of recalcitrant horses who refuse to come when whistled for by the farmer. This latter pair of animals lead the farmer and his hired hand a merry chase until they are finally caught *"and hitched to a seed drill - a bench."*[85] Even where all of the chorus can't be directly involved in the action, they participate through making the various noises and voices of the animals or things being mimed: the tinkling of the cream separator until it is turned fast enough, the mooing of cows, the oinking of pigs and their feeding noises, the drumming of noise sticks for horse's hooves, and, in the transition scene leading to Thorntree's entrance, the "knee-deeps" of spring frogs and other *"various farm noises"*[86] which fade into the harsh cawing of a chorus of crows.

The exuberance of action and rapid yet absorbed flow of role-changing exhibited in this scene is typical of the whole play, with the children transforming themselves as needed, in other scenes, into a pump, a farmhouse with utensils, trapped wild animals, farm children in the schoolyard, fenceposts, trees, dogs, autumn leaves, winter constellations and even *"the young children in the district*

[who] *can now be properly christened."*[87] For example, the opening scene of the play which introduces the idea of country becomes a form of shorthand which hits the ear more sharply and immediately than blank verse.

> *For the next sequence, the six chief actors mime the words they are saying. For "copse" they bring uplifted hands together and someone whistles a bird song. For "barn" they build a barn and so on. Not every word gets a gesture and the whole thing must be kept flowing, but the actors do say these words with their bodies as well as their mouths.*
>
> | | | | |
> |---|---|---|---|
> | Vale | hill | dell | dale |
> | Bush | rock | bank | field |
> | pool | wood | pond | creek |
> | ridge | hedge | copse | yard |
> | swale | lane | fence | wall |
> | path | road | ditch | post |
> | barn | shed | tree | house[88] |

More word mime-list sequences are used to establish Farmwife Dell's kitchen at sunset (objects and places), the country schoolroom (activities and objects listed and mimed), the schoolyard (lists of games and game verses), fall on the farm (crops and harvesting activities) and food for the betrothal/christening party (sung to "Turkey in the Straw" while the six main characters dance.) The climactic scene, of course, entails the whole cast shouting a fantastically long list of names at Thorntree, a ploy which ends his mischief for good by turning him into the thorntree he has already become in spirit.

In their use of antiphony and counterpoint,[89] some of the choral chants even seem to borrow from musical techniques first experimented with in *Cereus*. The autumn sequence where the children blow across the stage like falling leaves is a particularly good example of spoken counterpoint, given Reaney's suggestion of *"dividing up a chorus with one half chanting a basic repetitive line while the other half does a whole stanza":*[90]

> *They hum and whistle like the wind. The children whirl by again. Part of the group chant "The leaves are leaving the groves" underneath the following lines. Later on, select another repeat line and chant it under.*
>
> Oak leaves falling, fir needles stay
> Ash leaves falling, birch birch
> The elms are golden and soon are bare
> Beech leaves are blown and beechnuts are ripe
> The leaves are leaving the groves
>
> Under the gray sky, the bare woods and
> The squirrel's asleep and the ground
> Smoke from the chimney and frost on the ground
> The stream is still with
> still still
> Ice Ice Ice Ice
>
> *The idea of things that are flowing suddenly - still - They make the wind song again and sprinkle snow from their banks.*

The interaction between Dell, Rob and the chorus-as-animals constitutes, in turn, a kind of antiphony with Rob or Dell giving a solo line and the chorus responding with an appropriate sound effect or sentiment for the animal or thing being dealt with.

The child's delight in words and sounds in general, his ability to make-believe and switch identities with perfect facility, his fascination with music, rhymes and rhythms, his joy and energy of movement as well as the generally episodic yet swift and fluid nature of child's play have thus all been exploited by Reaney to solve the problem of action in relationship to set.

The significance of *Names and Nicknames* runs even deeper, however. As previously mentioned, one of the main difficulties with Reaney's early dramaturgy was a tendency to cram both the mythic and documentary levels of reality into a linear plot line that did justice to neither. Consequently, the audience, though invited to "give in" a little to the story and participate with their imaginations were not always aware of either the invitation or how they were meant to view the play as a whole.

Names, like *Masque* to some extent solves this problem by dividing these levels of reality into adjacent episodes each containing its own level of reality. However, where these espisodes remain quite distinct from each other in *Masque*, in *Names*, they dissolve and flow more fluidly into each other, allowing the various levels of reality to coalesce into three distinct yet closely interacting levels of action: the mythic life of the seasons which frames

the play's natural and human world, the smaller documentary world of the Dell household which is being sorely tried by Thorntree's evil tongue, and the larger social life of the whole farm community which is similarly being disrupted by the old man's wicked use of words.

In conveying and interlocking all three levels into a united whole, the children's chorus again performs an invaluable service. For, while the adult actors - the main characters in the play - carry the main storyline through in terms of the Dells' struggle against Thorntree, the children effectively supply, as a form of subtext to this main action, most of the mythic and social lines of action flowing simultaneously through the play. On a social level, the ability of the children to change identity quickly in their play makes possible the building up of a very tangible and real feeling of country, farm and even farm community, particularly in the barnyard and schoolyard sequences. Moreover, because of the child's association with poetry and myth - both of which have a strong place in children's literature - it also becomes plausible for the children to link, through poetic bridges of rhythmic verse, the personal and social action of the play to the larger patterns of nature present in the passing of the seasons and the cycles of life, death and rebirth they imply. Thus, Thorntree's greatest influence

is felt in the cold, sterile, cruel season, winter, and the Dells' babies arrive in summer and spring - the latter season marking Thorntree's defeat at last.

The dominance of the child chorus does more than place the Dells' christening problem and Rob's pursuit of education and marriage into a wider social and mythic context. It does it in such a way that the audience can easily accept the presence of all three worlds in the spirit of play and child-like imagination intended. The delight in games and play which seems discordant in adult figures like Bethel and Fay becomes perfectly acceptable when done by actual children, since play, pretend, games, taunting and even verse are perfectly natural to the state of childhood. The presence of the children not only makes the presence of a fluid, imaginary landscape plausible to an audience, but helps them accept the behaviour of the adult actors where and when they join the chorus. Being definitely set in the presence of a child's world, the audience (and perhaps even actors) are more willing to play by its rules, right up to the point of not only helping to imagine the landscape, but actually participating in the action when called upon. An opening discussion with the audience on the subject of names and nicknames, an opportunity to warn Mrs. Dell about Thorntree's eavesdropping and the need to help Rob whistle

and call back the chorus of dogs before Thorntree hurts them, are all included in the script to encourage audience participation.

It may be argued that an audience of children - and it was, after all for a children's audience that *Names* was written and performed - is much more likely to respond on a higher imaginative level anyway. Nevertheless, for a playwright who has always seemed somewhat wistful about the reluctance of adult audiences to give in to the magic, imagination and play inherent in his earlier plays (as he comments in "Ten Years at Play" many of them, along with "the occasional muttering actor" got lost at the rapids"[93]), the positive response of the *adult* audience members to *Names and Nicknames* must have been something of a revelation. To quote from a review of the play given in *Maclean's Magazine:*

> The play calls for audience participation and this audience - some of them sporting pin-stripe suits and gray hair - rose dutifully on cue to wave their arms and hiss like the wind going through trees and to imitate a variety of farm animals. Some of them were so pleased with themselves they hopped like bunny rabbits all the way to their cars.[94]

Reaney also must have thought back with some wistfulness on his chorus of creatively imaginative children when he began having to deal with actors who were totally alienated from the child-within-themselves, and thus somewhat

adverse to the idea of "playing" along with Reaney. As he comments on his experience in directing his early play, *The Sun and the Moon:*

> One wild idea I had, for example, was to drop the script, get everybody and run through the whole story in mime and improvising it as if we were making it up among ourselves. This idea was pooh-poohed by a really good actor in the cast who just was not used to thinking of plays in that way; no, there had to be a script and you followed it word for word.[95]

It is not surprising then, that Reaney's next new venture into adult theatre simply borrowed the basic dramatic structure and techniques developed in *Names* and applied them on a more sophisticated level.

Reaney has noted that "the courage to rewrite and direct *Listen to the Wind* came from my directing a four actor version of *One-man Masque* at Western."[96] However, the same power of child's play which distinguishes *Names* from *Masque* also sets *Listen to the Wind* apart from this latter play. In fact, it may be said that if *Names* draws strongly upon the power of child's play in effecting or furthering certain important changes in structure and technique, then *Wind* goes one step further in taking as its theme the spiritual and psychological power of creative child's play itself in coping with the harsh realities of everyday existence. In fact, much of the peculiar strength of this play lies in the manner in

which content and form merge; it is a play celebrating the power of play through the power of play.

Owen's own use of play hearkens back to a number of play theories mentioned earlier in this thesis. One of the most important ones is that play is the child's main instrument of learning and coping with the world; things or experiences in the outside world that are frightening, strange or bewildering will be acted out through play, sometimes over and over again until they become resolved to the child's emotional or intellectual satisfaction. Another very important theory touched upon is that child's play, like dreaming, often refers back to a more basic symbolic, animistic mode of thought, the problem often being worked out in the bold, simple figures and patterns of archetypes and myths.

The melodramatic world of Caresfoot court is such a world of archetypes and myths for the four children in the Perth County of the play. Though adults also help to "dream out" the Caresfoot Court world, it is still very much the children's play, and under their control - for they are most in need of help. Two of the children, Ann and Harriet, are facing the problems of death, illness or desertion in their families. Yet neither face them more immediately than Owen, who must cope not only with his mother's permanent desertion but the possibility of

his own death. The two are strongly linked in Owen's mind; if his parents stay together, he may live. But, as he tells his parents in Act II, if they keep letting go of him, he'll slip away. His lack of confidence in retaining both his parents, and thus living, is reflected in the tragic endings of most of his plays (as Ann complains) and his talks with Mitch about the graveyard. It is as though he is trying to familiarize himself with both the idea of dying, and the habits and rituals of that cold narrow neighbourhood of the earth to which he will soon be moving.

Caresfoot Court is created as a play to bring Owen's mother back. However, with its cruel, murderous mothers, ineffectual guardians, pure loving women, and young innocents attempting to grow up and mature in a hostile world of old hatreds and frustrations, it is even more importantly, an archetypal expression of the same mingled forces of affection, death and parental cruelty existing in the children's "real" world. And, as the play moves on, it increasingly becomes the means through which the children can imaginatively play with and reshape the same patterns and forces until they can at last come to terms with them in both existences. As an attempt to shape outer reality, Caresfoot Court fails; it can't bring Mrs. Taylor back permanently nor conjure away Owen's illness.

However, it does enable Owen to reshape his inner vision to the point where he can look beyond the immediate physical evil of death and desertion to a higher divine realm of Eternity that holds life and death both in its greater hand. That is a spiritual victory which neither death nor desertion has the power to destroy; regardless of Owen's physical fate, they have lost their early soul-crushing power over him. There is even the bare possibility that Owen's new maturity of vision might tip the scales of life in his favour; for by helping him to come to terms with a desertion that earlier would have destroyed him, and giving him the strength of spirit to fight an illness that depends at least in part on the sufferer's attitude, Owen may yet win his way to life and love.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about the action of *Wind* as described is that it seems like a dramatic explanation on Reaney's part as to how he meant audiences and perhaps even actors to view his early dramas. Certainly, there is a close resemblance between the expressionistic worlds of the early comedies and the melodramatic world of Caresfoot Court. For just as the latter is an archetypal expression of Owen's self and world, the former were meant to be strong metaphoric expressions of the audience's selves and world. The implication of *Wind* seems to be that if only the early audiences had imitated the Child figure Owen, in giving

in a little to their own capacity for imagination and play, they too may have found in *The Easter Egg, The Sun and the Moon* and *The Killdeer I,* a metaphorical truth that could help them win through the wilds of Experience in the everyday world. That Reaney intends Owen's spiritual odyssey through play to apply with equal strength to the audience is certainly implied even in the programme to *Listen to the Wind.* The roles of the cast are given under three headings: their role played on *"The Taylor Farm 1936",* at *"Caresfoot Court 1860"* and in *"London, Ontario present day".*[97] Only two of these worlds are actually presented in the play. This leaves the implication that even as Caresfoot Court is an imaginative world acted out in response to problems faced by the characters of the 1936 world, so are the 1860 and 1936 worlds alike, "dreamt out" in response to the same spectres of death and desertion faced by actors, playwright and audiences alike in the real world.

It is essential, therefore, that the audiences also "play". Reaney may not demand from adults the same level of active physical involvement he asked from the children's audience of *Names,* but he nevertheless demands their imaginative participation to an extent unprecedented in earlier adult work. By pulling the action out into the aisles through various exits, entrances, chase or journey

scenes, he makes the auditorium itself a part of the stage and thus moves the audience into closer association with the play's action. Moreover, the audience is given no choice but to co-operate with the actors in "dreaming" the play out. As with *Names and Nicknames*, the entire world of the play must be conjured out of a few essential props - four chairs, a stepladder, a bed, a table with assorted objects on it - laid on an otherwise bare stage. Thus, if they do not imaginatively complete the landscape suggested by the actors' shorthand of mime and sound, the audience will miss seeing the play altogether.

As with *Names and Nicknames*, however, Reaney is careful to structure *Wind* in such a way that the audience recognizes itself as being in a child's world where play, imagination and make-believe are natural. He begins, once more, by dividing the mythic and documentary strains often confusingly crammed together in his early drama, into three distinct but closely related levels of action. On the documentary level, we have the essentially quiet linear world of the Taylors' farm in Perth County during the summer of 1936, a world in which strong emotions and family crises alike may be present, but, as in real life, somewhat muted by shyness, propriety, habit - or the presence of children. On the melodramatic level, which is a heightened, metaphorical expression of the documentary realm, exists the world of Caresfoot Court. Spanning two

generations and a variety of locations, it mirrors the same tensions, hostilities and joys of the real world in the bold sensational terms of myth. Thus, embodying the essential features of human character and behaviour, the melodramatic world also mirrors in turn, the mythic realm of Eternity that spans all times and all generations; instead of the four seasons of *Names* which frame the seasons of human growth or sterility in the farm community, we have the five winds of the human spirit issuing from the realm of the Eternal. One by one they blow their mystic breath through both worlds uniting them alternatively in a common spirit of cold, harsh cruelty (the North Wind), warmth, love and fertility (South Wind), deep long-standing affection touched with melancholy (The Night Wind), malicious destruction and death (The East Wind) and finally reconciliation, peace and eternity (The West Wind).

This division of action lines borrowed from *Names* does more than just clear up confusion over which levels of reality are at work in the play; it also puts the expressionistic world of Caresfoot Court which dominates the overall action into a clearer dramatic context than that vouchsafed its counterpart in the early drama. For instance the action of the play begins in the realistic world of Perth County with the arrival of Owen's cousins.

Here, it is quickly established that like most children, these four are interested in playing; all they lack when they arrive is a good exciting story to act out and they immediately set about finding one. They experiment briefly with *Tarzan of the Apes* but Ann ends that play before it really begins by protesting:

> Too many female apes for me. Come on - let's think of something else. Something where we can dress up in old clothes from the attic - 6 people die in bed - from broken hearts - or poison - or get betrayed - that sort of thing.[98]

When they finally settle on Caresfoot Court, the audience is cued in, in a way they are not in the early plays, to accept the main body of the drama about to be portrayed as the imaginative projection of a group of young minds. Thus, the adult figure of Lady Eldred may be, in her own fashion, as great a witch as Madame Fay or Bethel, but placed in the clear context of a child's imagined world she becomes much more credible, both as a child's large projected vision of an adult cruelty present in real life, and as an adult played by a child.

An audience is also prepared to accept the child's play form of dramaturgy used: the advancement of the action in intense episodic bursts, the lavish use of sound and motion, the employment of a few objects or even one's own body to create an imaginative landscape that

can swiftly and fluidly melt into another, with the same objects, perhaps rearranged slightly, assuming quite a different identity in quite a different time and place.

However, Reaney is careful to ease his audience into the modes and conventions of the imaginative world by having the children work them out among themselves onstage. Act I not only introduces the audience to the main characters of Perth County and what roles they will play in the Caresfoot Court drama, but sets up most of the imaginative shorthand that will be followed throughout the play. In Scene 3, a stepladder is established as a tree with a haunted well at its foot while the four chairs become the house at Caresfoot Court itself; arranged by Owen and Jenny into an *"avenue of trees"*[99] these same chairs become the symbol for Hawkscliffe Hall, and, in yet later scenes and arrangements, a summerhouse and a pig hut. The flash of an antler signifies a forest, a crossbuck a railway station. And just to make sure the audience remains in no doubt of where they are, or the meaning of the shorthand used, the location and, where necessary, time of each scene in the imaginary world is introduced at its onset by one or the other of the children. A convention like the carriage wheel which is used to signify the journey of a horse-and-carriage, is established with particular care because it will be used so often and with so many variations. In fact, most of Scene 9 is spent by Owen and

his cousins working out this convention, their experimentation climaxing in Maria's trip to the station, *"a journey that takes in part of the auditorium so that the boy running with the wheel enchants itself into the onlookers' minds."*[100]

Once enchanted, however, Reaney expects his spectators to remain enchanted. He may pause in Act II to give the children a chance to establish the yet unfamiliar convention of the dog pack, and later on, that of the tropical South Sea island of Madeira. However, most of the important conventions have been established by the end of Act I, and, having given the audience time to adjust to the imaginative demands of the child's world in front of them, Reaney begins to whirl it by them with even greater fluidity and complexity.

The convention of scene announcements accompanied by the appropriate display or arrangement of props continues, but as the second Act goes on, the mime of the chorus becomes increasingly more elaborate and complex. The simple carriage wheel convention builds into an imposing death coach:

> *Rogue's coffin becomes part of a death coach mime which wheels out into the audience - have horsehoof sounds that differentiate between the hollow sounds of bridge and the solid roads. Hear bits of chain rattling on the harness, horses whinnying... It has candles and lamps. The coachman cracks his whip.*[101]

Similarly, the wind convention builds into a true fury of a storm as the East Wind grows:

> *Weather vanes turning. Smoke suddenly shifting like wild blue hair from a chimney. Great armies of branches waving, creaking, and groaning. A deer darts in the forest. Keyholes whistling. Wires and ropes and stone walls whizzing and humming... A girl holds a small window up to a boy who taps on it with a branch. The branch breaks the window pane. In the storm the Caresfoot staff is blown down.*[102]

Moreover, the generally linear line of the inner play's action begins to be fragmented by enacted flashbacks, and divided among the varying perceptions and actions of Arthur, Angela and the Douglas-Geraldine conspiracy. Angela begins, for example, by talking to Mr. Gleneden (Scene 35) about her feelings that the others are plotting against her, an account that involves Angela's enactment of three threatening encounters she has had with Piers, Geraldine and Douglas in the months following Arthur's departure. After a brief visit to Perth County, 1936 (Scene 36, 37) where the children set the Madeira and sea conventions, the action cuts to Madeira (Scene 38), a few months before Angela's account, where we see Arthur unwittingly play into the hands of Geraldine by surrendering the ring. The action then moves ahead again to the completion of Geraldine and Douglas' plot upon the day of Angela's visit to the vicarage (Scene 39) and finally

circles back to the action of Scene 35 (Scene 40) where Angela is still talking to Mr. Gleneden about her fears when the death coach arrives. From there, the action cuts back and forth until the end of the Act between Angela's despair, wedding, and wedding night at Caresfoot Court, and the jubilant homeward journey of Arthur. The spirit of the East Wind which has begun to blow, a few stanzas at a time, in the worlds of both Caresfoot Court (Scenes 35, 41) and Perth County (Scene 41) where Owen lies deathly ill after an attack of his illness, climaxes in a full-blown storm at the end of the Act, which expresses the spirit of death, despair and misery reigning in both worlds.

This rapid flow of widely varying times, places and perspectives works on a more complex level than it does in *Names and Nicknames*, but the dramaturgical techniques that makes it work is essentially the same: the presence of an essentially bare stage upon which scene after scene can be swiftly yet vividly created through an evocative shorthand of mime and sound, then fluidly dissolved into the next. The result, notes critic Jay Macpherson is a production "astonishing" in its "sense of play, of freedom, of creation before one's eyes."[103]

In creating this kind of production, *Listen to the Wind* demands actors as well as audiences who are not afraid to play. And by transferring the protean children's

chorus of *Names* to *Wind*, Reaney ensures the inspiring presence of a number of the natural masters of play in his production. As in *Names*, the adult actors again carry forward the basic storyline. This time, however, it is in two worlds rather than one, and, since one of those is the child's world of Caresfoot Court, these adults still have to have a fair capacity to mime and pretend. Nonethess, Reaney once more, with good effect, puts the burden of the poetic subtext and vocal/visual make-believe in the hand of "a chorus of a dozen young people". In the words of Jay Macpherson:

> ...the sound effects contributed by the chorus, provide half the life and atmosphere of the play. The chorus mime, recite, sing, thump, clap and play instruments from recorder to pop-bottle; waving antlers they are a forest, surging and whooshing they are the sea, holding flowers and twittering sweetly they are a dewy English garden. When needed, they mingle on stage as party guests or a pack of starving dogs... Above all, by establishing season, prevailing wind and specific atmosphere for most of the scenes, they add immensely to the play's imaginative dimension.[104]

A second reviewer, speaking of another production in Vancouver in 1978 also notes the efficiency of the chorus:

> Mainly composed of young teenagers it *plays* Reaney's material and creates his atmospherics with a beautifully natural involvement - their work has the unaffected honesty of classroom theatrics.[105]

That the adult actors of that particular production had some difficulty adjusting to an effective playing style in the Caresfoot Court world may justify Reaney's apparent hesitation to trust most adult actors to give in completely to the same free, uninhibited play style he asks of the children.

In any case, both reviewers' comments help reveal why this chorus of children plays as strong and unifying role in the overall structure and dramatic effectiveness of *Wind* as it does in *Names*. On the realistic level of Perth County, they serve, naturally enough, as local neighbourhood children come to watch and help act in Owen's play. On the imaginative level of Caresfoot Court, they supply, as in *Names*, the sounds, places, animals, objects and extra characters of that imaginative world, through body mime, pretend and imaginative use of voice and props. Their very presence also makes it easier for audience and actors alike to view and accept this level of action as a "play" world. On the mythic level of the Eternal, they serve as the poetic chanting voices of the Winds with appropriate mime as needed. Again, as children are associated with myth, poetry and the magic realm of the imagination, they make this level more acceptable in the audience's eyes. Moreover, simply by their physical presence, they help link the cousins' world of child

play to the realm of the divine and eternal; that it has, in fact, been the cousins' means of reaching the Eternal realm of the spirit is confirmed as they speak poetically *"free - in Eternity -"* where *"they will never taste death again"*:[106]

> We wove a web in childhood
> A web of sunny air;
> We dug a spring in infancy
> of water pure and fair;
>
> We sowed in youth a mustard seed,
> We cut an almond rod;
> We are now grown up to ripened age;
> And they withered in the sod?
>
> The mustard seed in distant land
> Bends down a mighty tree;
> The dry, unbudding almond wand
> Has touched eternity.[107]

Listen to the Wind marks the end of Reaney's first line of experimentation with children's theatre. *Names and Nicknames* and *Listen to the Wind* are both something of country idylls, with the documentary realm of the play dwelling as in *Twelve Letters* upon a rather gentle, nostalgic view of country life rather than the satiric treatment of small, or even large, town foibles and psychology present in *Nettles, Winnipeg, London,* and the early dramas. The same is also to a large extent true of *Apple Butter,* the representative of the puppetry line of experimentation. Even the negative presence of figures like Thorntree, Mrs. Taylor or Victor Nipchopper cannot

destroy the friendly fertile grasp of the natural world of farm and country encompassing the plays' action. Moreover, while a definite sense of community is imparted in *Names, Wind* and *Apple Butter* alike, it is still subordinate to the realm of the natural/mythic present in the seasons, winds, or nature spirits, and the central characters' relationship to them. *Listen to the Wind* which functions in large part as a form of psychodrama for Owen and his cousins is, in fact, probably the most private and introspective of Reaney's mature dramatic work. Moreover, while a number of techniques experimented with in *Names*, and sophisticated in *Wind* - the bare stage, the imaginative shorthand - carry through to the later children's and adult drama, the rather haunting technique of having adult actors (usually playing one or two roles at most) carry the basic storyline, and a highly protean chorus of children supply the poetic subtext and main imaginative effects is never used quite the same way again.

Yet, if *Listen to the Wind* marked the end of one important line of experimentation, it also helped issue in the next by inspiring the creation of the Listener's Workshop. For, the second phase of Reaney's experimentation in children's theatre, beginning in *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match*, and culminating in *Colours in the Dark*, is very much Workshop-influenced drama. As such, these

plays present yet another set of solutions to the problem of form.

In general, it could be said that what puppetry does for the mythic or metaphorical aspects of Reaney's art, the Workshop and Workshop-related plays do for the documentary aspects. As previously mentioned, the purpose of the Workshop was to draw the whole community into a bare room where they could improvise or "play out" redemptive new visions or myths for themselves out of their everyday life and environment. In short, the Workshop was meant to allow real people to do what his characters did onstage; give spiritual and human meaning to an alien, material world otherwise hostile to the human spirit. The children's plays written during the Workshop experiments (*Match* and *Ignoramus*) tend to reflect those aims. As Reaney notes in his preface to *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children:*

> When I directed Listener's Workshop these plays were basic to the Saturday morning sessions. Things developed around them - young directors, young and old playwrights. Given this book it is possible to develop a grassroots theatre movement based on classical and local traditions (*Ignoramus* depends on both Aristophanes and a CBC Citizens Forum broadcast)... I hope these plays will help you to listen as beautifully as this. Don't be afraid to make changes that fit in with your particular place. As a matter of fact it might be fun to take out the basic idea of each play and improvise your own play around it. Eventually you should be able to take a walk down the corridors of your apartment or the sidewalks of your neighbourhood and

> come back with a play you have played out and listened to on the way.[108]

In contrast to *Names* and *Apple Butter*, which are only loosely tied to a specific place or time in the real world, *Geography Match* and *Ignoramus* are very much pre-occupied, in their own fantastical ways, with actual events, things and places familiar to the juvenile actors and audiences alike.

Ignoramus, for instance, deals with school subjects. The frame of the action is a debate (based on a real one on CBC radio), followed by a 17-year contest between the proponents of two modes of educational thought. Dr. Hilda History of the classical school advocates classical teaching methods which train the mind by teaching solid facts in solid areas of knowledge like the languages and history. Dr. Charles Progressaurus of the progressive school argues that the main purpose of Education is to make the "whole child happy, teaching him to fit into his environment...and express himself."[109] There is no need for "cultivation with dead language and so-called mental discipline."[110]

The debate itself is not new in essence; the same conflict of educational philosophies arises in *A Suit of Nettles* and *Three Desks* as well. Likewise, the debate's use of oversized props (also a feature of puppetry) and the fantastical nature of the contest itself may be

attributed to the Aristophanic influence Reaney mentions. However, the manner in which the contest is conducted is entirely Reaney's own. For, with the action of the play consisting largely of first Hilda's then Progressaurus' students learning a particular subject, the twenty children in the play are asked to mime, chant, and to some extent, improvise scenes based on a wide range of school subjects they have already encountered in the classroom.

Again, as in *Names*, word lists are used extensively, this time to quickly and strongly convey the impression of school and education. However, where at least one of the word list sequences in the earlier play does the same thing, there is an important difference in emphasis. For, in contrast to the educational word list in *Names* that conveys only a pleasant yet generalized idea of classroom activities, the word lists in *Ignoramus* grow strongly out of real subject matter the children are actually studying. As Reaney notes in regard to one of the history sequences:

> This sequence needs further research and explanation, preferably by the Classics teacher and his/her students. The pronunciation and spelling alone might take a day to check out.[111]

Moreover, since the respective classrooms of Progressaurus and History, thus created out of word lists reflect a very real and current educational war being

fought in the classrooms of the nation, the whole play becomes a dramatic exploration by the students into the whole question of educational philosophy. The realization to which Reaney hopes to guide both participants and audience can be seen in the outcome of the contest itself. For while one feels that Hilda, with her advocacy of a sound classical education has won the contest as decisively as she has the debate the Governor-General's decision is a draw, basically because of Progressaurus' student Beatrice. In the face of Charley's refusal to give them anything to really believe in, she has, in best Workshop-approved fashion, turned the chick emblem and cleaning instructions of a discarded Bon Ami can into a life-sustaining religion.

As the prophet and priestess of the latter, she becomes, as her name implies, a kind of divine guide, genuinely uniting and inspiring many of Charley's group towards an academic excellence they otherwise would not have achieved under his inept tutelage. The implication of the tie seems to be, that while a solid academic education of the kind Hilda advocates is indeed better than the "progressive" pablum Charley offers, the children acting in the play can still bring a sound education to Beatrice's inspired sort of life through the kind of mime, action and chanting they have used to present the

subjects onstage. As Reaney says in the preface to the play:

> I hope the play is amusing, but I also hope that if you saw the Roman empire as a chant-dance-mime in front of you, you might take away the attitude that history was fun, not just labour.[112]

If *Ignoramus* reflects a new concern with the actual documentary life of the Canadian community and its members' relationship to it, *Geography Match* crystallizes this new concern into a dramatic manifesto that looks forward to the social/historical drama of the 1970's. For, the two groups of school children scurrying through Canada past, present and mythic are representative of the negative and positive emanations of the Canadian psyche, even as the Child figures in the early plays represent the ambiguous soul of man.

On the present day or "realistic" level, these two groups of children are competitors in a coast-to-coast race through the actual present day geography of Canada, complete with mountains, seas, prairies, rivers, muskeg, towns and cities. The attitude of each school brings it, in turn, under the influence of Mr. Wolfwind - the embodiment of money, greed, materialism and destructive urbanization and industrialism - or Miss Weathergood who embodies nature, myth, imagination and freedom of spirit.

The Blazers, Wolfwind's adopted "team" rely only on money to get them through and thus often fall into trouble because they choose neither to know or co-operate with nature; furthermore, motivated by greed and haste, they begin to "cheat", their behaviour becoming increasingly cruel and malicious. The Shady Hill students, Miss Weathergood's protegés, fall back on fair play, imagination and spiritual openess to the land, and are rewarded by the help and friendship of nature spirits (The Iceberg Lady, the Mammoth) or spirits of the past (Tecumseh, the French Nun). Unlike the spiritually blind Blazers, this group of students know their nature catechism well enough to wake friends like Nanabozho or avoid the clutches of evil spirits like Muskeg Meg.

Beneath Wolfwhistle and Weathergood in turn, lie the Indian deities of Grizzly and Coyote and beneath them, the eternal powers of Light and Dark, struggling for the land and people of Canada.

The subject of the Manichean powers of Light and Dark meeting in embodied form and struggling for control over the personal and social lives of a group of human beings was explored once before in *The Sun and the Moon*. In fact, the main difference between these two plays is essentially one of dramaturgy, Reaney's work for children having provided him with new solutions to the

problem of form present in the early plays.

In *Geography Match*, as in *Listen to the Wind*, the physical presence of children and a style where mime, play, games and make-believe sweep across a bare stage to create then dismantle one imaginary setting after another lets the audience know they are in a fairytale or fantasy realm; in such a context it is perfectly acceptable for old maids and businessmen to turn into mythic coyotes or bears, or for Indian gods, personified Icebergs and Muskeg, as well as the ghosts of long dead mammoths, nuns or warriors to converse with people open to belief in them.

Moreover, while it may be difficult to make human actors into quite the metaphoric expressions of nature that Treewuzzel and Rawbone are, *Match* experiments with stylized costuming and masks to achieve much the same effect as the earlier puppetry in sharpening the metaphorical level of the action and characters. This visual form of shorthand becomes particularly important in the case of Wolfwind and Weathergood, who like their counterparts Kingbird and Shade, must function on two levels of reality at once. However, where this latter set of opponents must wage their metaphysical battle in the same human form with which they relate to the documentary realm of Millbank, Wolfwind and Weathergood are under no such restriction. A rascally businessman and a kindly

spinster, respectively, in the documentary realm of the play, they simply become, in the donning of a costume, the Bear and Coyote of Indian legend when called upon to function in their mythic capacities as the personified powers of Dark and Light, then switch back to human form when the mythic battle is over.

At the same time, Reaney manages to anchor this accentuated mythic realm in the real world with the sharp nails of chanted-mimed word lists of real subjects, places, names or events that will strike sharp, associative impressions in the audience's minds. Save for the odd song, riddle or rhyme, poetic passages of the kind Reaney uses to evoke the seasons in *Names and Nicknames* have almost vanished, perhaps because they don't convey place and action quickly or dynamically enough. In their stead the word lists first used in *Names* have been much expanded in both *Ignoramus* and *Match*, suggesting that these lists struck Reaney as being the best form of dramatic short-hand he could use to put a whole country onstage or, for that matter, seventeen years of education.

This shorthand of mimed and chanted word lists is also probably one of a number of techniques that Reaney developed more fully in his improvisatory workshops with children. Not only do the accounts of the workshops we have include the acting out of an alphabet of words which

capture the essence of a particular time or place, but the stage instructions of both *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match* hint at the improvisatory nature of the lists themselves. In *Geography Match*, for example, Reaney notes:

> There are many opportunities for participation on the part of the young actors who often come up with better ideas than the author or director; many sequences can be rehearsed separately with student directors and then sewn together at the last rehearsal.[113]

Similarly he notes in *Ignoramus* in regard to the Roman history sequence:

> *Think up mimes that fit the most prominent names, for example, the Wolf who suckled Romulus and Remus can be made out of a gymnastic combination of three bodies... As long as the rhythm of the play is not lost, there is a great deal of interpretation and improvisation possible here with big moments at assassinations and poisonings; diminuendos towards the fall.*[114]

Another strong influence of the workshops may possibly be seen in the fact that the eight young actors of *Geography Match* and twenty of *Ignoramus* essentially play themselves; young Canadians (who are also representative of the young Canadian soul) imaginatively exploring the jungles of Canadian history, geography and education.

As such, they act out not only the children, but, mostly through the word lists, the children's subjective impressions of the things, people and places they

experience either at school or in travel. This simultaneously gives the children more scope for imaginative action and less; as set characters, they lack the fully protean quality of the chorus in *Names* or *Wind;* the latter having no set identity slip easily from one level of reality to another, from one man, animal or object identity to another with complete fluidity throughout the action. Since the children in *Match* create both the action and their imaginative reaction to it - a potentially confusing situation for an audience - the imaginative sections, like the word lists, tend to take the form of clearly indicated improvisatory sequences set apart from the "realistic" prose-action flow of the play. Also, as the children's subjective experience of an event or subject (and also because the word lists go by so quickly), many of these imaginative sections tend to register dramatic impressions of words rather than clearly established make-believe identities.

Perhaps, the most interesting workshop influence, however, is the enormous sense of community both within the plays themselves and the original staging of them. In *Names, Wind* and *Apple Butter,* it is distinct individuals like Apple Butter, Victor Nipchopper, the Dells, Thorntree, Owen and Mrs. Taylor who shape the action. In *Match* and *Ignoramus,* the protagonists and antagonists tend to be

opposing groups of people and thought. Individuals like Beatrice, Charley and History may stand out to some extent in *Ignoramus* but the real conflict is between opposing schools - literally and figuratively - of educational philosophy. The same is even more true of *Match* where the spiritual influence of pole figures like Wolfwind and Weathergood is supplemented by a whole array of dead heroes and nature gods. Again, the main conflict is a struggle between two different schools of people and of thought over who will "win" Canada.

Dramaturgically, *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match* offer less room for audience participation than *Names and Nicknames*, but when a good portion of the school is already participating in the play either onstage or backstage, perhaps there's less need for it. *Ignoramus*, which had fifty-one actors in its first production, comes close to Reaney's workshop ideal of having a community "act out" or "play out" a real issue or event relevant to their lives, in an attempt to grasp a higher spiritual understanding of it. In Reaney's notes to *Ignoramus* he says:

> I have used *Cours Moyen* and other high-school texts so that it can easily be a play for young people with their teachers taking the adult roles, all working together at interpretation and precision... A whole school and all its curricular and extra-curricular activities can be involved. One production used the swimming team as the twenty orphan babes wheeled from the back of the cafeteria in shopping carts.[115]

Geography Match, similarly was acted out by twenty-three schoolchildren, many of whom helped backstage with music, costumes and props. However, in his preface to the play, Reaney notes that this is not necessarily the the way it has to be done. His original cast suggestion was for eight young actors to play the schoolchildren with four adult actors assuming the other fifteen roles[116] - a cast division which, if not used in *Match*, was actually developed and used in Reaney's next adult play, *Colours in the Dark*.

In fact, there is a great deal in terms of overall dramaturgy that *Colours in the Dark* owes to this second, Workshop-influenced line of experimentation in children's theatre. Yet, it is an influence largely missed if simply evaluated in terms of specific devices, scenes or subject matter. For example, it is true that the Tecumseh scene in *Colours* is lifted almost wholesale from *Match;* so are the *"traffic symbols, blinking excavation lights, crossbucks... screams and traffic noises"*[117] of the Toronto street scene. Also from *Match* comes the model house convention that was to assume such importance in Reaney's later plays:

> *There should be some way of presenting Miss Weathergood's house - a model house suspended or on stage - or flying through as they talk about it.*[118]

Similarly, Beatrice's Existence litany (adapted in turn, from an earlier poem, "The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker") becomes the Existence poem framing the action of the play. Still other borrowing come directly from the Listener's Workshop

itself:

> One of our (Listener's Workshop) projects was a history of London, Ontario called *Antler River*. In this we showed the fate of a set of dishes bought five generations ago. Loss-break-loss-wear-until now, only one cup left. Also we showed all the ancestors of a small girl back to her sixteen great great grandparents. There happened to be thirty-two people present that Saturday morning. In *Colours*, these two workshop ideas become the Set of Dishes sequence and the end of the Berry Picking Scene.[119]

Some borrowings even come from the non-scripted plays arising from the Workshop. For instance, *Genesis* contributes, specifically, the "Big Rock Candy Mountain" song and, generally, the singing or playing of familiar folk songs as a way of adding an extra dimension of subtext to the action.

At the same time, there is much else contributed directly to *Colours* in this way, that predates both the Workshop and the Workshop-influenced theatre. For instance, the Cruel Schoolmaster scene (Act I, Sequence 11) and subsequent turning of the tables, with the children gleefully whipping all the cruel adults who have oppressed them seems derived in theme and mood from *Apple Butter*. The actual use of marionettes in some of the more fantastical scenes like the Christening (Act I, Sequence 9) is an even more direct borrowing. Much more significantly, in its emphasis on building a whole human life out of a collection of loosely tied episodes - some satiric, some realistic, some poetic - *Colours* seems to have derived a number of elements from *Masque;* this is particularly true of the poetic passages

which consist, in both plays, of selections from Reaney's early poetry in adapted or original form. The fact that many of these poems have either been sharpened aurally and visually through choral chanting and mime, or placed in a more strongly dramatic context by incorporating them into imaginative scenes brought to vivid life and identity through a shorthand of sound and motion, derives in turn from *Names and Nicknames* or *Listen to the Wind*. The latter play may even be seen as contributing the basic storyline that holds *Colours* together; for again, as in *Wind*, the whole action of the play revolves around a sick boy and the use of his imagination.

What these forementioned plays do *not* contribute to *Colours* is the strong communal/social focus of *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match*, nor the attempt of the latter to simultaneously sharpen and consolidate both the mythic and documentary aspects of Reaney's vision through a shorthand based on puppetry techniques, child's play and word lists. Also particular to the Workshop-influenced Children's drama is the playwright's greater confidence, born of many months of intensive improvisational play with the young and young-of-heart, in his ability to get adult actors and audiences alike to sink into "the relaxed awareness that comes when you simply play", and thus enter that "peaceable kingdom, energetic, joyful and serene" that makes "the world of dread much easier to face afterwards."[120] And taken all together, these influences born of the second line of experimentation - greater confidence, pre-occupation with the documentary,

and increased shorthand techniques - were enough to transform *Colours in the Dark* into a very different play from either *Masque* or *Wind*.

For instance, it may be true that *Colours in the Dark* tells essentially the same story as *Listen to the Wind;* it is also a play about a sick boy using the powers of the creative imagination to guide himself through the threat of spiritual and physical death. Yet, if the story is the same, the terms in which it is unfolded are very different from those of *Wind*. In the latter play, the issues, events and people who trouble Owen's inner self are projected and resolved physically in the form of play. However, in *Colours in the Dark*, Reaney dispenses with the outward manifestations of the imagination in favour of portraying the creative imagination itself; he takes us right inside the mind, the inner self, of the blind immobilized child, who is simultaneously the grown poet, who represents Childhood fulfilled.

In short, if as Shade notes, child's play is indeed "a simple outward expression of a vast inward vision",[121] it may be said that in *Colours in the Dark*, Reaney tries to put directly on stage the "vast inward vision" that lies behind all play - and all poetry. Through the powers of the conscious and unconscious mind, it is a vision that contains all times, all people and all realities. For, in addition to one's own personal memories and experiences, the mind simultaneously shares - through

stories and legends told by elders, and strange symbolic figures rising out of our imaginings, dreams and nightmares - in the collective memory of a specific community and culture, and, beyond that, the collective unconsciousness common to all mankind. Thus, as critic Michael Tait comments in his article, "Everything in Something", the protagonist is simultaneously a boy of ten, using his imagination and crayons to challenge the sick room's darkness, a representative Canadian child growing up amidst "the rich chaos of darkest Canada: a national psyche shaped (and warped) by geology, history, anonymous ancestors, King Billy, Queen Elizabeth, the Bible, the Devil, Little Orphan Annie and much besides,"[122] and finally, every child-man passing from paradise to redemption through the desolate landscape of an experience yet to be humanized by love, faith or imaginative understanding.

It is not surprising then, that the central action of the play revolves around the question of identity implicit in the concept of metaphor. In fact, if *Listen to the Wind* is a celebration of the power of play, *Colours in the Dark* is a hymn of praise to the power of associative, symbolic thought possessed by children and poets both and manifested in their play. It is a mode of thought capable of grasping the puzzle of how two objects like a pebble and a hill, a dewdrop and lake, or a flower

and a star are at once different and the same. For, the creatively imaginative mind has the power to see that one object or person can possess a variety of spiritual meanings; the Jungian Grandfather, for instance, is at once himself and such disparate persona as Professor Button and Mr. Winemeyer, the Angel of Death and Tecumseh. Similarly, the creative mind can grasp the converse side of the same metaphoric truth: that widely varying objects and people can still possess the same spiritual essence. Thus, while the Bear, Button and the Schoolmaster differ in identity and appearance, they are all nonetheless manifestations of the same nihilistic, soul-destroying spirit. Similarly, Sal, the old music teacher and Mr. Winemeyer manifest the same spirit of faith, love and creativity though they are by no means the same people. The hero really only matures when, increasingly lost and buffeted by a fragmentary world of things and objects, he finally, once and for all, rejects the "sophisticated" adult philosophy proposed by Button, that a thing is the sum total of its physical nature, and has no spiritual relationship to anything else. For, it is only by looking beyond the ugly, deformed body of his charge to the free spirit within, that he at last recovers the "green leaf" of "love and patience"[123] which can transform the spiritual "desert...into meadow green."[124]

Even as thought is infinitely faster, more fluid and complex than play itself, so is the structure of *Colours in the Dark* in comparison to *Wind*'s. The text is still divided into episodes, but they are not announced. The text still varies, as well, between sequences of prose and poetry, but also now added are improvisatory stage-metaphor sequences like the Toronto traffic scene or train stop word-lists. Gone is the careful introduction of the play's imaginative conventions; props, speech context and suggestive pictures flashing across a screen are considered enough to establish time, place, people and mood. Gone too is the careful division of the action into three distinct levels of reality. Like *Wind, Colours* may start out on a realistic level. This time it is a birthday party where the Father, pressed to reveal the source of his amazing "psychic" powers, remembers himself as a sick child blindfolded and confined in a darkened room, with only crayons and a colouring book to lighten the long weeks of illness. But once we are established as being inside the boy/poet's head where all levels of reality are present at once, and intermix freely, we don't re-emerge from it until the end of the play, when the boy regains sight and health. The different colours, with their associative objects, planets and letters, emerge at the

beginning of different phases of the action, to remind us that the creator of all that is passing before us is this boy using his imagination and various crayons to colour in the unseen objects in his colouring book.

However, for the most part, the action functions on the strongly symbolic, associational and emotional level of an imaginative child's mind. For instance, a remembered buggy trip to town (Act I, Sequence 17) and the local store (Act I, Sequence 18) touches off not only a realistic memory of an 1810 store (flashed on screen), but the beginning of a whimsical "what-if" fantasy where the very proper grocer and his clerk have a most unsettling experience with a lady customer and a roll of string. This in turn touches off the memory of a humorous cheese poem (Act I, Sequence 19) before the mind returns to finish the string fantasy (Act I, Sequence 20). Similarly, the Sadie and the Bear scene (Act I, Sequence 8) is diverted, by Sadie's cry to her parents for help, to the thought of ancestors (first formation of the family tree), and then a christening (Act I, Sequence 9) which becomes another "what-if" fantasy of grossly indecisive parents and flying babies. The topic of children, brings the mind back to finish the story tale of Sadie. However, alerted now to family and ancestors, it won't be long until another fantasy (Act I, Scene 11), involving

children first trying then beating their unfair, cruel elders, slips first into a semi-legendary historical tale of injustice and cruelty, heard at a summer camp or school (implied by screen with "*a kid's drawing of Indian camp*") and then (Act I, Sequence 12) a serious historical sequence involving the arrival of the immigrants. In the manner of memories, some, (Act II, Sequence 8) like the protagonist's first experience of Toronto, are extremely fragmentary - little more than a confused blur of blaring sounds and sights. Others, like his memories of teaching in Winnipeg (Act II, Sequence 11), are a multi-textured composite of student's names (a word list recited throughout scene), a typical lesson assignment (two sentences are to be given by students on things or people experienced in a walk through Winnipeg) and a general impression of what the city was like (sentences read out and to some extent enacted.) Still others, like the hero's remembrance of a boarding house (Act II, Sequence 14), mix subjective times; he is at once a boarder overhearing fragments of conversation and action from other tables around him (represented by actors changing chair and body positions around the same table as each group's conversation arises); and himself in the future trying to explain to the long-dead landlady (and perhaps himself) why he would not be a pallbearer at her funeral.

The end result is a script that is faster and more complex than *Listen to the Wind* at its most fluid, and Reaney has had to consequently tighten his imaginative shorthand to sharper, swifter terms. In doing so, he reverts back to techniques developed in *Geography Match* and *Ignoramus*. For example, the presence, in some scenes, of the bold-lined, mythic-fantasy-fairytale world of Caresfoot Court recall is registered instantly through the puppet-like technique, used in *Match* of having the actors don mask and stylized costume. While some scenes like the Christening, which involve flying babies, are better suited to the use of actual marionettes, in general, the costume-and-mask serves a better purpose, in allowing the bigger size, and better control and flexibility of the human body on a live stage to be combined with the metaphoric features of the puppet. This is particularly true in such scenes as the Sadie and the Bear, Dance of Death or Bridge of Adolescence sequences which all entail a bold, larger-than-life mythic quality captured well by the equally bold, larger-than-life mythic quality of the Mask, yet also demand an almost child-like swiftness or exuberance of action, better suited to the human body.

At the same time, in projecting the much stronger documentary level of the play, Reaney also often resorts

to *Match* and *Ignoramus*'s shorthand of word lists in portraying actual places, people and events in the Canadian community - past, present and mythic. The arrival of the immigrants becomes a chanted word list of boat names; eleven generations of people is condensed into an inventory of how many grandparents, great grandparents, great great grandparents, etc. go into making one child; train journeys to Winnipeg and Toronto are represented by the calling out of the CP and CN station stops on the way to a destination.

However, besides simultaneously sharpening and condensing the respective mythic and documentary levels occurring throughout the play itself, Reaney also tries to expand this technique into a number of the individual sequences themselves. Aided by the overall context of the action - a child's imaginative mind where all levels of reality exist simultaneously - he sometimes layers a number of sense impressions and varying realities into a single scene, as he does with the Winnipeg lesson, and boarding house sequences. Still another internal form of shorthand is embodied in a cruciform of projection screens upon which a series of images and impressions, some realistic, some mythic, many coloured by the boy's emotion, imagination and subjective experiences, are flashed, memory-like, to provide a sharp and simultaneously

rendered subtext to the action on stage.

Even with the technical aid of these methods, however, the play still demands an unprecedented amount of imaginative participation from audience and actors alike.

In *Wind*, the adult actors play dual roles with the children rendering most of the imaginative effects, and identity changes. In *Geography Match*, it is suggested that the adults play three or four major roles each, with the children (as in *Ignoramus*) retaining their roles as children throughout, though still providing most of the imaginative effects such as songs, dances and acted out word lists. In *Colours in the Dark*, the children again retain their roles as children and pick up many of the more "humbling" imaginative functions such as becoming a pack of barking sun dogs, a fighting forest of personified trees, a group of street urchins throwing religious taunts, or a set of breaking dishes. In both functions, they help to convey, again as in the Workshop-influenced plays, Canada as seen and experienced by the protagonist as a creatively imaginative child. However, once the action moves beyond Act I, which corresponds to the protagonist's childhood, into the adolescence and adulthood phase of Act II, the children largely disappear from the action; it is the adult actors who are left to do the reciting, the chanting of word lists, the portrayal

of imaginative figures like the Rain-lady and her doll. Moreover, each actor is required to play, not merely two or even four different roles but upwards to eight or nine. In thematic terms, there may be sound Jungian reasons for having a character like the grandfather, mother or niece assume so many persona; on a practical level, it means that the actors themselves must have an almost child-like capacity for swiftly assuming and shedding identity. In fact, it may be fair to say that if play is a physical manifestation of the creative imagination, then the best way to present an inside view of the creative imagination, in physical terms of the stage, is through play. And it is perhaps an indication of Reaney's increasing confidence in the power of improvisatory workshops - and workshop type rehearsals - to bring adult actors back in touch with the child within, that he is willing to demand so much "play" acting from them. In speaking of the creation of *Colours in the Dark* he notes:

> I find this a very wonderful way to write - constantly improvising with a group each week- real people, particularly kids... From this group [Listener's Workshop] the scenes went to another group where my ideas met the same creative atmosphere intensified by professional skill and experience. The play was the result of various groups of people working out shadings and ways among themselves.[126]

From the audience, Reaney is prepared to ask somewhat less in physical terms. However, if *Listen to the Wind*,

which celebrates the power of play, demands that the audience allow their minds to play as well, *Colours in the Dark*, which celebrates the internal workings of the creative mind or imagination, almost demands that the audience allow their minds to work on the same fluid, associative, symbolic level as the poet/child's. As with *Listen to the Wind*, the play's structure itself, and the strong physical presence and imaginative play of actual children onstage, particularly in the Childhood phase of Act I, helps achieve this. The other method used, however, comes straight from the communally oriented children's plays of *Match* and *Ignoramus;* by evoking, as part of the protagonist's memories, actual incidents, people and places from the audience's communal experience, Reaney forges a strong sympathetic bond of shared experience between poet/boy and audience. They are therefore, more likely to embrace the boy and his spiritual odyssey or struggle as being their own or at least relevant to it. Moreover, since much of the shared communal experience like the Orphan Annie Song and dance (Act I, Sequence 15), familiar childhood religious taunts (Act I, Sequence 14), the Orange parade and Royal Visit (Act I, Sequence 13) is part of the audience's past, their very portrayal is likely to send the audience's mind back to their own childhood memories in the same imaginative,

associative manner that the play's structure parallels in portraying the grown poet's own remembrances. For in the remembering the audience also becomes, like the protagonist, both the child experiencing the event, and the grown adult remembering the child.

Colours in the Dark was the last adult stage play Reaney was to write in the sixties, except for a revised version of *The Killdeer*. This second version (*The Killdeer II*) along with *Three Desks* actually find the roots of their origin in Reaney's earlier phase of playwriting. As such, they share many of the same limitations in style, particularly in regard to the linear plot line and static set. Moreover, Reaney's attempt in these plays to solve the problem of form through downplaying the mythic or expressionistic element in his drama in favour of a more naturalistic style of dialogue, characterization and action, tends to set them even further out of the mainstream of Reaney's development as a playwright.

However, unlike *The Sun and the Moon*, which was re-written and staged before the main body of Reaney's experimentation with children, these two rather atypical plays were written - or re-written - in the later sixties when this experimentation was at its height. As such, Reaney's work with children still left a strong mark on these later plays, absent in *The Sun and the Moon*.

In *The Killdeer II*, this influence reveals itself largely in the form of a greater emphasis on sensual stimulation as well as on the ability of the positive Child characters to achieve their ends through the use of improvisatory play. This greater glorification of the power of child's play also seems to demand, in turn, that the protagonists, themselves become even more child-like in nature. Instead of becoming Eli's spiritual parents, Rebecca and Harry function instead as his elder siblings. They are, in fact, three children together using the weapons of their toys, their imaginative mimicry, their delight in sound, movement and magic, to best a Madame Fay who is suddenly more menacing adult than overgrown child:

> *Then she hears REBECCA imitating her mother's footsteps. She sees: bubbles, distractions balloons, an arrow, a paper dart, a rescue. MADAM FAY is flustered. Runs about searching for the sources of sound which seem to come from flashing mirrors, stove, windows, doors, something down the chimney. Magic lantern projections, a spinning top.*[127]

This increased emphasis on child-like characterization and play affects the action of the play profoundly in other areas. For instance, the erotic sexual consumation between Harry and Rebecca in *The Killdeer I* has been replaced by a scene where they repair his old bicycle. Moreover, instead of using his lawyer's training to help Eli and Rebecca, Harry renders help through setting that legal training aside to play hide-and-seek, sleep in haystacks and pick berries with Eli and Becky all summer. Finally, instead of offering her life to save Eli, Rebecca saves him from Madam Fay's sinister influence by pretending, killdeer-like to be lame, and thus drawing her away in a futile game of tag.

The banishing of the mythic figures of Ballad and Manatee from the action, as well as the whole legal/social apparatus of trial and courtroom, seems designed to place more emphasis on the young peoples' ability to solve their own problems through the use of their imaginative powers. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the contribution made by Reaney's children's drama to *Three Desks*

consists of the addition rather than subtraction of a whole social sphere to the personal action of the play. For when Reaney finally adapted the early television draft into a stage play, he also wrote in a Glee Club who supply songs as subtext and bridges in the action, play individual students as needed and provide the general bustle and noise of the communal school world surrounding the inner drama of the professors. By that time, Reaney had been working the Workshop for over a year. The sudden addition of a contrapuntal communal action, as well as a Glee club chorus who act, in some capacities, like Reaney's other choruses of children, seem obvious innovations from Reaney's children's drama experiments.

The first intense burst of experimentation finished only two years after *Three Desks*' appearance. Yet in the few short years between *Names and Nicknames*' production in 1963 and the close of the Workshop in 1969, Reaney's drama, much influenced by his written and improvisatory work with children, had undergone a revolutionary change, a change that was to reach its highest degree of integration, balance and development in *The Donnellys*.

In structure, the plays from this period break away from the constricting linear plot and static set through assuming the fluidity, the espisodic nature, the imaginative shorthand of child's play; a wide variety of

identities, times, places and even realities can thus be summoned up on a bare stage in a twinkling; then with the same imaginative use of a few props and the body itself which created the scene, it is possible for the latter to be instantly dissolved into another as the rapid line of the action presses forward. In addition to creative body mime, the sharper speaking rhythms of children's games or chants, and extensive sound effects by the human body and voice both help to establish the imaginative reality of scenes, and convert the poetry of the early plays into larger, more tactile terms with greater visual and aural appeal.

In terms of presenting the mythic and documentary halves of his artistic vision onstage, each of the three lines of Reaney's experimentation in children's theatre presented a number of solutions to the problem of form. From puppetry came the possibility of large, sensational or magical effects appropriate to the realm of the mythic or satiric; similarly, the highly metaphoric, and suggestive nature of the puppet itself made possible a form of visual mythic shorthand, adapted for live theatre in *Geography Match*, and used in *Colours* as mask-and-costume for live actors. *Names and Nicknames*, the first line of children's theatre experimentation, divided the action into three separate levels of reality, conveyed in alternating

episodes, which both furthered the action on their own reality level while commenting on the realities in the adjacent scenes. The linear storyline, conveying the personal level of the action is carried forward by adult actors, with a chorus of children largely providing the communal and mythic subtext to it. This structure was carried with variations into *Wind*. From the second line of experimentation in children's theatre, done in conjunction with the Workshop, came an increased emphasis on the documentary aspect of Reaney's vision and the development of the mimed-and-chanted word list technique as a means of documentary shorthand. In a technique borrowed and adapted by *Colours*, *Geography Match* attempts to combine the mythic shorthand of the puppetry, the documentary shorthand of *Ignoramus* and the child's play which simultaneously touches both, all together in the same play.

In terms of audience and actor dynamics, the amount of imaginative participation demanded of both parties increased rapidly, particularly with the onset of the Workshop, which, in creative drama fashion demanded the optimum of active imaginative involvement from all concerned. Even if the audience in the adult drama is not asked to "play" with their bodies in these plays, then they are at least required to "play" with their

imaginations, completing in their minds what has been merely suggested by props or body or word onstage. To help facilitate this, Reaney even incorporates a chorus of children into *Colours in the Dark* and *Listen to the Wind;* faced with these masters of play and mime, the audience may not only accept the onstage mixture of reality, myth and make-believe, which is so much part of a child's experience of life, but re-awaken to the imaginative child deep inside themselves.

In content, the plays deal not with child-like men but actual children, and glorify the child-like powers of play and creative imagination. In early plays like *The Sun and the Moon, The Killdeer I,* or the *Easter Egg,* salvation comes more through finding one's true spiritual parents and kin than from the protagonist's own imaginative efforts. In *Wind* and *Colours,* the situation is reversed; negative and positive adults still appear to hinder or help the protagonist, but he is ultimately responsible for his own salvation through the power of play and imaginative thought. This extends as we have mentioned even to the re-write of *The Killdeer.*

Moreover, opened both by the possibilities of placing multiple times, places and people on the stage, and Reaney's workshop experiments in having real people - particularly children - act out the real life of the

community, the plays begin to take on a much more communal aspect. This is less true of *Killdeer II*, which, with its omission of the trial and courtroom scene is even less a social play than *Killdeer I*, and *Listen to the Wind*, written before the workshop experiences. It is most certainly true of *Colours in the Dark* which is almost as much a celebration of the Ontario community, past and present, real and mythic, as the powers of the imagination. It is also true of *Three Desks* despite its dominantly realistic style.

In content, character, and structure, then, the plays of Reaney's second period of drama are very much "children's" plays. Children, and their imaginative play or thought were never to assume quite the same direct importance as characters or subject matter again in Reaney's work to the end of the 1970's. This may be because *Listen to the Wind* and *Colours in the Dark*, are dramatic manifestos in themselves on the importance of the Child, and his play and imagination. This being the case, these plays may contain, to Reaney's satisfaction, all to be dramatically said to date on the subject.

The same could not be said for either the emphasis on communal subject matter and participation first opened by The Listener's Workshop, nor yet of most of the dramaturgical techniques brought into play by the rest of

Reaney's experimentation in children's drama. The opportunities for the development of community-based themes and subject matter, the stage style of fluidity, sensual richness, imaginative shorthand and stages metaphors built around props and bodies, as well as the increasing demand for actors and audiences alike to involve themselves imaginatively in the play action, were all to be further intensified and developed in the plays of the seventies.

Footnotes - Part Two: The "Children's" Plays

[1]Germaine Warkentin, "The Artist in Labour: James Reaney's Plays", *Journal of Canadian Fiction* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter, 1973) p. 88.

[2]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play" *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 53.

[3]Ibid., p. 54.

[4]Richard Courtney, *Play, Drama and Thought* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1968) pp. 27-34.

[5]Ibid., p. 39.

[6]Ibid., pp. 70-72.

[7]Ibid., p. 36.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 71.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 126.

[13]Ibid., pp. 66-69.

[14]Ibid., p. 65.

[15]Ibid., p. 38.

[16]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd.) p. 48.

[17]Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950) p. 17.

[18]Ibid., p. 14.

[19]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 173.

[22]Richard Courtney, *Play, Drama and Thought* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1968) p. 180.

[23]Bili Tyas, *Child Drama in Action: A Practical Manual For Teachers* (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1971) p. xiii.

[24]Richard Courtney, *Play, Drama and Thought* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1968) p. 1.

[25]Nellie McCaslin, *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom* (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1968) p. 5.

[26]Ibid., p. 5.

[27]Ibid., p. 2.

[28]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd.) p. 88.

[29]Nellie McCaslin, *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1968) p. 2.

[30]Winifred Ward, *Playmaking with Children* (New York and London: D. Appleton - Century Company, Inc., 1947) p. 10.

[31]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London, University of London Press, Ltd.) p. 88.

[32]Winifred Ward, *Playmaking with Children* (New York and London: D. Appleton - Century Company, Inc., p. 1947) p. 10.

[33]Nellie McCaslin, *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom* (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1968) p. 5.

[34]Joyce Doolittle, Zina Barnieh, *A Mirror of Our Dreams: Children and Theatre in Canada* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1979) p. 17.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 136.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., p. 17.

[39]Children's drama as a genre distinct from adult drama did not really come into its own until the twentieth century. The first company to specialize in playing for young audiences was established by Natalia Sato in Russia in 1917, while the foundations of creative drama were being laid by people like Slade and Way in Britain, and Ward in America, during the thirties and forties. The decades following World War II have marked a phenomenal period of growth and development for both creative drama and children's theatre.

[40]The tremendous success in recent years of Jim Henson's "muppets" certainly argues that puppets can appeal to a wider audience than children. At the same time, it should be remembered that the muppets have obtained their large and enthusiastic audience through the medium of television and film rather than that of theatre.

[41]Dezsö Szilágyi, "The Modern Puppet State and its Audience" in *The Puppet Theatre of the Modern World* comp. Union Internationale des Marionettes, (London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1967) pp. 35-36.

[42]Sergei Obraztsov, "Some Considerations on the Puppet Theatre", Ibid., p. 20.

[43]Dezsö Szilágyi, "The Modern Puppet State and its Audience", Ibid., p. 36.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 37.

[46]James Reaney, personal letter (January 22, 1980).

[47]Ross Woodman, *James Reaney* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971) p. 26.

[48]Ibid.

[49]James Reaney (editorial) *Alphabet* No. 13 (June, 1967) p. 2.

[50]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 54.

[51]Ibid.

[52]James Reaney, personal letter (January 22, 1980).

[53]Nellie McCaslin, *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom* (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1968) p. 2.

[54]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London, University of London Press Ltd.) p. 88.

[55]Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press Ltd.) p. 129.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ross Woodman, *James Reaney* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971) p. 27.

[58]Ibid., p. 27-28.

[59]Ibid., p. 27.

[60]Doris Cowan, "With Reaney Eyes", *Books in Canada* Vol. 7, No. 5 (May, 1978) p. 19.

[61]James Stewart Reaney, *James Reaney* (Agincourt Gage Educational Publishing Limited, 1977) p. 7.

[62]James Reaney, personal letter (January 22, 1980).

[63]Ibid.

[64]James Reaney, *Apple Butter* in *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973) p. 11.

[65]Ibid., p. 10.

[66]Ibid., p. 13.

[67]Ibid., p. 10.

[68]Ibid., p. 20.

[69]Ibid., p. 26.

[70]Ibid., p. 10.

[71]Ibid., p. 23.

[72]Ibid., p. 29.

[73]Ibid.

[74]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en 1*), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 4.

[75]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[76]Geraldine Anthony, ed., *Stage Voices* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1978) p. 147.

[77]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en 1*), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 4.

[78]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 59.

[79]Ibid., p. 60

[80]Ibid.

[81]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en 1*), *Black Moss*, Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 2.

[82]Ibid.

[83]James Reaney, "Names and Nicknames" in *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973) p. 103.

[84]Ibid., p. 101.

[85]Ibid., p. 109.

[86]Ibid., p. 110.

[87]Ibid., p. 137.

[88]Ibid., p. 125.

[89]Antiphony refers to a form of singing in which two groups of people sing (or chant) alternate lines or verses of a single work, often in a responsorial fashion. Counterpoint refers, in turn, to "a melody added as an accompaniment to a given melody" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). In Reaney's case, it is possible to substitute "melodies" with separate lines of dialogue, sound effects or even action which are meant to occur simultaneously and complement each other.

[90]Ibid., p. 128.

[91]Ibid., p. 129.

[92]Ibid.

[93]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1968) p. 59.

[94]"Goldilocks, Ali Baba, Farmer Dell: Christmas Heroes for Stagestruck Kids", *Maclean's Magazine* No. 77 (January 4, 1964) p. 48.

[95]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1968) p. 54.

[96]James Reaney, personal letter (January 22, 1980).

[97]James Reaney, *Listen to the Wind* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1972) p. 10.

[98]Ibid., p. 15.

[99]Ibid., p. 20.

[100]Ibid., p. 30.

[101]Ibid., p. 84.

[102]Ibid., p. 94.

[103]Ibid., p. 8.

[104]Ibid. p. 8.

[105]Max Wyman, "Listen to the Wind", *Vancouver Sun*, February 25, 1978, p. B3.

[106]James Reaney, *Listen to the Wind* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1972) p. 112.

[107]Ibid.

[108]James Reaney, *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973) p. 5.

[109]James Reaney, *Ignoramus*, Ibid., p. 148.

[110]Ibid., p. 151.

[111]Ibid., p. 163.

[112]Ibid., p. 143.

[113]James Reaney, *Geography Match*, Ibid., p. 35.

[114]James Reaney, *Ignoramus*, Ibid., p. 163.

[115]Ibid., p. 143.

[116]Ibid.

[117]James Reaney, *Colours in the Dark* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, (1969) p. 63.

[118]James Reaney, *Geography Match* in *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1972) p. 46.

[119]Raby, Peter, ed., *The Stratford Scene 1958-1968* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1968) p. 143.

[120]James Reaney, *Colours in the Dark* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1969) p. 4.

[121]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1954) p. 88.

[122]Michael Tait, "Everything is Something", *Dramatists in Canada*, ed. by William H. New (Victoria: University of British Columbia, 1972) p. 142.

[123]James Reaney, *Colours in the Dark* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1969) p. 89.

[124]Ibid., p. 76.

[125]Ibid., p. 31.

[126]Raby, Peter, ed., *The Stratford Scene 1958-1968* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1968) p. 143.

[127]Reaney, James, *The Killdeer II* in *Masks of Childhood*, ed. afterword, Brian Parker (Toronto: New Press, 1972) p. 264.

Part Three: The Donnelly Trilogy

Sticks and Stones (1973), *St. Nicholas Hotel Wm Donnelly Prop.* (1974), *Handcuffs* (1975)

Voice II: I would like to ask Dr. Progressaurus if there isn't a problem about this fitting people into an environment.
Progressaurus: My good man, what is your little problem?
Voice II: Suppose your environment's evil?[1]

Ignoramus

I. Introduction

The writing and production of The Donnelly Trilogy was to absorb most of Reaney's creative energies between 1967 and 1975. As Reaney himself notes:

> ...the story of the Donnelly family in historical terms was so riveting to me that it led me like a Jack-o-Lantern through an enormous, 8 year swamp of legal MSS, newspaper, microfilm, archival vigils and the like without one solitary regret.[2]

The length and intensity of this research period may in turn have been partially responsible for the fact that *The Donnellys*, originally conceived as a single play, had become three full-length dramas by the time it reached production: *Stick and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One), *St. Nicholas Hotel, Wm Donnelly Prop. (The Donnellys:* Part Two), and *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three).

Yet, for all its sweep and complexity, the trilogy follows closely in the footsteps of *Wind* and *Colours* in being essentially a children's play for adult audiences. In terms of theme and characterization, for instance, it builds strongly, once more, upon Reaney's vision of the Child at work in the personal and social life of man.

However, the greater documentary focus of *The Donnellys* and consequent emphasis on the social rather than personal human patterns of behaviour deriving from this vision borrow much from Reaney's children's drama of the sixties. So does the style containing the vision. For, many of the dramaturgical techniques first explored or expanded on in the children's puppetry, theatre and Workshop activities are carried forward into the trilogy.

However, the integrating force which was to ultimately transform, refine and meld these techniques into the characteristic Reaney style of the 1970's was to derive in many ways from yet a new line of experimentation with children; this time, in the form of children's workshops built right into the writing-rehearsal process. Through this, Reaney was able to draw even more directly than in *Colours* and *Wind* upon the power of child's play during the formative writing stages of the script itself, as well as the vitally important productional and rehearsal phases. Moreover, by serving as training sessions to get adult actors back in touch with the child-within, these

children's workshops were to foster a development that was to have an extremely important effect on the dramaturgy of the seventies: the forming of a company of young actors committed to Reaney's ideal of "play" theatre.

II. The NDWT Company and *The Donnellys* Workshops

In "Souwesto Theatre: A Beginning" Reaney notes that after five years of research were over he found himself with five legal blue binders filled with transcribed material:

> I found that the three plays of *The Donnellys* corresponded to three of these binders. All-all!? I had to do was pare things down from 200 hours of dialogue and action to three hours per binder![3]

Although "a series of workshops with my [Reaney's] own group, The Listeners, at Alpha Centre and Mini Theatre where we used this material in prototypes of the Donnelly plays called "Antler River" and "Sticks and Stones"[4] did much to help shape this vast amount of material, these workshops did not solve an even greater problem Reaney was to face: a way of bringing to professional production the peculiar and demanding script emerging from the workshops and research.

An early attempt to produce a workshop-type production of *Sticks and Stones* with John Hirsch, director of

Colours in the Dark, and a group of Statford Theatre actors was not overly successful. Reaney himself tends to attribute this failure largely to the actors' inability to touch the child-within and actively "play" with his material. As he comments rather bitterly:

> [They] just sat there like blocks of wood. And they had all this professional equipment, supposedly, but whatever it is, it hasn't trained them to be pigs, or cows, or horses, or do thirty multiple roles in one night... They got these looks of horror on their faces when they realized what they might have to do.[5]

It is perhaps significant then, that the actors and director Reaney finally chose to work with in 1972, were intimately connected, in their own ways, with *Listen to the Wind*, Reaney's early dramatic manifesto on the power of play. Keith Turnbull, who had also co-directed *The Sun and The Moon* with Reaney, had been the producer of the first production of *Listen to the Wind*. Similarly, the group of actors he was working with in Halifax had decided to form themselves into a company while performing a 1972 production of *Wind* under Turnbull's direction. In many ways then, the NDWT company (as it was eventually called) also arose, like the Listener's Workshop, from *Listen to the Wind* participants who wanted to go on.

This being the case, it was only logical for Reaney to turn once more to Workshop-like methods to help this

receptive group rise to the challenge of his "playful" theatre. To this end, the official three week rehearsal period directed by Turnbull was prefaced in both Parts One and Two of the trilogy by three weeks of Workshop preparation - actors and children in the morning, actors, director and crew alone in the afternoon - under Reaney's direction. Thus, every morning for three weeks in the summer of 1973, the cast of *Sticks and Stones* met with local children to re-improvise the Workshop-derived scenario *Genesis*. Similarly, in the following year, the *St. Nicholas Hotel* cast met with fifty local participants at Schwartz's Spice Warehouse to produce *Hellas*, a dramatization of the Greek alphabet.[6] The summer afternoons of 1973 and 1974 were spent, in turn, workshopping the actual script of Parts One and Two of *The Donnellys* respectively. If the subject matter of the afternoon workshops was different from that of the morning ones, however, the basic technique of splitting the larger group into several smaller ones, each assigned to work out a specific scene or sequence from the whole scenario, was essentially the same for both. As David Ferry says in connection with the afternoon workshops:

> Jamie would come into the workshop with the script and he'd say "Right, we have to do this now". And then he says, "This is what I see." And he would give a very brief description. And he'd send off a couple of actors to go and

> work one section, and others on another. And then he would join them together and finally, through the combination of the actor's imaginations, influenced by this children's kind of beliefs, we'd come up with fabulous ideas and we'd do it physically and he'd get excited at the possibilities so he would demand more and he would write more.[7]

This passage suggests something of the impact the morning workshops with children had on both the acting style of the NDWT company, and on the overall style and structure of *The Donnellys*.

To begin with, by teaching actors that "the existence of one's body and voice and inventive capacity is fun"[8] the morning workshops *did* train actors to be "pigs, or cows, or horses or do thirty multiple roles in one night."[9] As David Ferry notes:

> ...we became more and more like the children so that in the afternoon when we would workshop *Sticks and Stones* itself, the influence was very big on us and how we let go with the script... each actor had to portray something like forty-nine different parts - and that takes a certain facility in just immediately changing character and adopting a new character and a whole new character - which children do. And that was a very strong influence and help to us I think.[10]

Moreover, in addition to strengthening the actors' imaginative faculties, Reaney feels that the children's workshops made his actors "more literate about metaphors and general shape."[11] Preparing actors for a play that involves "a great deal of symbolism, imagery and shifting

levels" would have been more difficult without the morning workshops that helped open "the mind to myth and metaphor" and showed that "the young are frequently very sophisticated in this regard."[12]

However, Reaney wanted his children's workshops to produce more than just a group of imaginative individuals. If anything, he had found too many professional actors already too individualistic for his taste. As he notes in "Kids and Crossovers":

> ...in the mid-60's when I began to work with Keith Turnbull and local actors in London, Ontario I used to notice with despair that the role some of the young actors were adopting was that of a self-sufficient, egotistical "star". I wanted to work with some other kind of actor; I had to find them since the kind of play I was beginning to write involved choral ensemble. Miniature Errol Flynns, Tallulah Bankheads and Greta Garbos are never going to get together in a play that involves the submerging of individual identity.[13]

Reaney found this other kind of actor by having the cast essentially serve as spiritual "parents" - psychic children of the mature variety - towards the children in the Workshops. As he comments:

> ...as a young actor you are given 10 kids to organize into a band of grasshoppers and there's no time for Stanislavski or moodiness because the five minutes of playing time you are in charge of is part of a giant structure nine other actor/directors are working on. And the kids are already on top of you demanding attention, help, music, entertaining and praise. The baby needs attention; are you Tallalulah Bankhead

> or Hans Christian Andersen? Well, I think what survived from the mornings with the children was a bunch of Andersens - actors willing to make fools of themselves, willing to invent on their own, to improvise, to keep moving, to never get tired, and to say yes rather than no when the insane author or director thought up some new problem in symbolism to be solved.[14]

Moreover, if one remembers, along with educationalists McCaslin and Hartley that "one of the most basic characteristics of play is the teamwork involved"[15] and that "dramatic play helps the child develop from a purely egocentric being into a person capable of sharing and give and take"[16] then it becomes even more clear how the morning workshops helped Reaney produce a well-integrated company willing to "play" co-operatively with each other as well as with the script.

In terms of script, the direct influence of the children's workshops is not so immediately apparent. Though it is made quite clear that some sequences in *Colours*, like the family pyramid and the inherited dishes scenes were adapted straight from Listener's Workshop exercises, in the case of *The Donnellys*, Ferry notes:

> I don't think that many of the images directly from the children's workshops worked their way into any of the scripts. They influenced only the size and the method and the freedom of the work of the actors with the playwright on his script.

Noting the thematic difference between the morning

workshops and the afternoon ones with the actors, this is not surprising. Yet, even assuming that the cast's workshops were in essence a continuation of the children's ones, their direct influence on the script must not be overestimated. Ferry again mentions that the actors' workshops were very useful in Reaney's draft rewriting process to the extent that they helped to eliminate and weed out scenes that didn't work either in themselves or in the context of the play. They also opened his mind to new possibilities for scenes and helped him clarify exactly where he wanted to go with the play. Again in Ferry's words "what he wanted was already there but it was not finite, ...it was all up in his head just that... he had so many ideas that he really had to workshop with actors to see what he wanted to say."[18] However, Ferry, fellow company member Patricia Ludwick, and Reaney himself emphatically deny that *The Donnellys* was of the genre of "collective creation" in which plays are put together by actors, shaped by a director, sometimes with input by a playwright. Workshopping, in Reaney's estimation, may be an excellent method of ensuring that the actors, director, and even the playwright himself thoroughly understand the playwright's work. However, this is not to be confused with having the actors actually write the play. As he mentions in *Hallowe'en* 1:

> Why do theatres specializing in documentary improvisation hire writers at all if not for purposes of torment; eveyone knows that canoes go faster than rafts and a raft is what you're likely to get when you let everyone have a go at what is not their vocation.[19]

The presence of the children in the Donnelly plays was real enough, according to Reaney, but it manifested itself in more intangible qualities like "the quickness of movement, the fluidity... the shameless exuberant use of energy."[20] He also speaks, in general terms, about the children's influence on overall patterns and designs in the plays, a debt, he acknowledges, shared with the earlier Listener's Workshop:

> I wonder if this sense of design I didn't have 11 years ago comes from the intervening workshop experiments. There I've got used to eliciting flows of power and movement, got used to watching for the currents of those flows as they come out of people playing with other people the game of mimicking reality... this is what I want my plays to be wrapped around - the delight of listening to words, the delight in making up patterns (scribbling with your body/bodies) of movement for fun and in play.[21]

In this connection, he also says in *Hallowe'en* 1:

> Would like to examine Rhoda Kellogg's books on Children's Art as a possible source for stage movement and drama convention since she says that the child artist's hand after going through a 22 scribble pattern spiral ends up dancing a mandala. If you're interested you might examine the blocking of the Fleeces of Wool scene as opposed to that of the Donegan Torture scene; in *our*

> minds were some of the experiments young artists make at the age of three with off-centre composition and it seems to me that there is a great deal more to be explored here.[22]

Yet, as Peter Slade observes, the child's "painting and drawing are closely associated with Drama" and "we already note that both in their pictures and their Play the same shapes and signs occur."[23] The fact that one of the basic shapes Slade mentions is that of the cross, in turn, lends great significance to Reaney's comment that:

> I kept seeing all the Donnelly events in terms of two viewpoints that cross... This resulted in stage movement, scene settings, speeches that form St. Patrick's X's.[24]

Other patterns that Slade mentions of being of importance in children's play include "stomping, clapping, the circle, the journey."[25] In this context, it is fascinating to note that an early draft of *The Donnellys* was entitled *The Stompers and The Clappers*. Though the latter name was eventually abandoned, perhaps when the one long play finally became three in the early 1970's, *Handcuffs* retains the stomping/clapping action as an important aural and visual motif. Moreover, if *Sticks and Stones* is dominated by the cross pattern, then it is equally true that the "stage movement, scene settings and speeches"[26] of both *St. Nicholas Hotel* and *Handcuffs* are in many ways

dominated by the circle design. Similarly, the journey motif is found throughout the trilogy as a whole.

Given the fact that many of the major designs in the trilogy are derived from child's play, it is perhaps only appropriate that many of the major stylistic conceptions behind *The Donnellys* again come back, directly or indirectly to children. In *Hallowe'en* No. 1, Reaney comments:

> Since the story involves such a large family and such a busy, intricate community the three ring circus style seemed natural; I guess its something that usually you only think of music or film doing - the making of a statement on several levels at once, the making of several statements all at the same time, or as my old Counterpoint book used to say: a three dimensional statement. Medicine Shows have somewhat the same effect. I expect they are offshoots of Minstrel Shows.[28]

Yet, as Tarachow comments, the circus and the minstrel show are, like puppetry, actually a form of "child's theatre, dramatising the child's fantasies, conscious and unconscious, his daydreams, his games, his nightmares, his anxieties, his wildest dreams", presenting him "not only with victory over space and gravity, magic and illusion" but "an opportunity to work through specific anxieties and fantasies, mostly of a progenital nature."[29] Moreover, in regard to his admiration for film and music techniques, Reaney once more comments that it has impressed

him "how *much* through working-at-a-play-the-way-children-would-play-it-as-if-it-were-a-big-game you can steal some of the power that musical and visual forms do have."[30] In short, Reaney recommends that if one is writing or producing "the kind of play" which, like music, film and the circus alike includes "ensemble and levels of textures and a mosaic of fragments, then - try your local orphanage for help."[31]

In helping to produce a company of actors willing to approach the script "like children putting on plays"[32] and in heightening Reaney's own sense of play designs and fluidity, the morning workshops - Reaney's own version of the "local orphanage" - did much to transform the themes, human behaviour patterns and dramaturgical techniques of the second playwrighting period into the distinctive style of the Donnelly trilogy.

III. The Plays

Colours in the Dark and *Listen to the Wind* resemble the full-length comedies of Reaney's earlier period of playwriting in that they too concentrate on exploring the psychic life of the imaginative Child. The dramaturgical techniques and form may have changed considerably in these later plays, but character and action alike are

still largely products of a single Childish consciousness wending its mythic or metaphysical journey through the wilderness of Experience towards a salvation of the spirit.

While also preoccupied with the figure of the Child, *The Donnellys* moves far more strongly into the documentary half of Reaney's vision through its exploration into the psychic life of an actual historical community. And, as with the earlier *Dance of Death at London, Ontario* and "A Message to Winnipeg", which also portray the spiritual life of a city, the vision of *The Donnellys* is an essentially pessimistic one. Gone, is the triumph of the Child over the spectres of alienation, cruelty and death in the world and the self; gone, the passage through love and imagination into that higher spiritual realm of Childhood fulfilled. In its place, we are left with a community of regressed children - vicious, pretentious, materialistic - who move to ruthlessly drive back and destroy the natural beauty and strength of the land and the human spirit in nineteenth century Lucan, Ontario.

It is the Donnellys themselves who embody this spirit of human and natural growth, and it is indeed significant that their direct psychic and physical control over the action of the trilogy is strongest in *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One), where the community of Biddulph is still little more than primeval forest and fertile farm soil. Not only does their perspective

dominate over the whirl of viewpoints and memories which compose *Stones*, but it is largely the Donnellys who summon the landscape of Biddulph out of the past, and establish its features and boundaries. They have the power not only to update the Roman and Protestant lines as the inhabitants change, but to successfully challenge on occasion what they consider an incorrect portrayal of that line by their neighbours. They can even challenge the Medicine Show's incorrect portrayal of themselves and demand the chance to give their own version of Farl's murder. Yet even before the first Act of the play is over, it is possible to see that the Donnellys, and with them, the fresh new country of Canada itself, are already destined for abuse and destruction.

Part of the reason for this almost preordained fate derives from Reaney's metaphysical view of the Child; as the early comedies demonstrate quite clearly, the negative and regressed aspects of the Child instinctively hate and strive to destroy the positive and creative manifestations of the same human spirit. And, as the first Act of *Sticks and Stones* establishes the social context against which Mr. Donnelly loses half his farm and kills Partrick Farl in 1857, we begin to get the disquieting feeling that most of the community beginning to spring up around the Donnellys functions at the emotional level of a gang of malicious children. They

are emotional, vindictive people who name-call, constantly try to "get even", "cheat" to get their own way, enjoy destructive pranks and have great fun dressing up in funny clothes and having their own private "clubhouses" complete with secret rituals and ceremonies; rival "gang members" are of course driven off, and non-members of either are fair prey for both. There is probably no more revealing scene in *Sticks and Stones* than the "good-natured" fight at Andy Keefe's tavern over the election results. To the accompaniment of "*sounds from saws on wood, rended wood, sounds of broken glass*" and the shouts and comments of both factions, the Protestants of the community "*drive the Catholics offstage with their clubs*" only to have "*the Catholics secretly return to the stone pile and throw all the stones offstage at pursuing Protestants.*"[33] Visually this conveys the impression of two opposing gangs of young toughs hurling their customary insults and objects at each other upon the slightest of provocations. And we don't forget the impression when the Protestants, becoming the sticks of the Protestant Line, and the Catholics, the stones of the Roman Line, begin to hem in and trap in the Donnellys. As Reaney notes:

> *This is one of the most important design images of the story, a man caught between the lines of his neighbours, caught in a ladder, and the big dance at the end of the play will*

emphasize the quality of the Donnellys being planted in rows of people they can't get away from.[34]

The natural antipathy existing between the mature and immature aspects of the Child may lie behind that certain "something about us" as Mr. Donnelly complains, "that made people never able to leave us alone."[35] If the regressed Child figures of the early plays are unable to refrain from persecuting the enlightened Child figures trapped in their family or household, there is no reason to expect a whole community of Madam Fays, Bethels, Mrs. Gardners and Edna Moodys to show any greater restraint towards the Pollys, Rebeccas, Elis and Harrys trapped in their midst. Yet, it is precisely because *Sticks and Stones*, and indeed, the whole trilogy deals intensively with the community rather than just the individual, or individual family, that the larger social patterns of behaviour explored in the communally-oriented children's plays become important. For much that is portrayed in a light or humorous fashion in these latter plays becomes important in explaining just how and why this basic animosity existing between the spirit of the growing Biddulph community and that of the Donnellys will eventually resolve itself in the tragic murder of the family and the fresh new spirit of Canada itself.

In *Geography Match*, for instance, both schools are continually required to recite incantations or answer riddles instigated by the ruling deity of a particular region, before they are allowed to pass on safely to the next phase of their journey; a failure to respond, or respond correctly to the deity's demands, means, in turn, either non-passage, or even active persecution.

In *Sticks and Stones*, the riddles and incantations take the form of the various catechisms and initiation rites of various "churches". There is the catechism of the Whitefeet ("Did you not know, Jim Donnelly, that no Whitefeet is to have any dealings with the Protestant and the heretic Johnson?")[36]; the Cassleigh creed ("The fifth commandment of God is: Thou Brimmacombe - should not have seen me beaten so badly")[37]; the confirmation of the Catholic Church ("Are you crippled then when you're praying?... would you know then how to address the bishop with the proper form of this title if you should decide to ask him this question of yours.")[38]; the catechism of statistics and law ("Number?...Age?... Height?...How many natives of Canada?...How many acres?"[39]) Finally, there is the catechism of the Donnellys themselves ("Why was I a Donnelly?"[40]) and of the greater church of Biddulph; the latter takes the form, in Act III, of a reprisal of many of the questions asked by

various people and factions throughout the play. It is precisely this catechism of Biddulph that the Donnellys must pass if their journey of life through the township is to continue, or, at least continue unharassed. But, as Jennie comments:

> Our confirmation came up and although we had known our catechism well, we failed.[41]

The reason they fail to satisfy the ruling deity of the township: "the bishop in his flame-red robes"[42] in many ways hearkens back to that basic question posed to Progressaurus in *Ignoramus:* "Suppose your environment's evil?"[43] The question which goes unanswered in that play is tragically answered in *The Donnellys;* in Biddulph, you either fit in, leave, or die for being "tall... different and [not] afraid."[44]

This essentially sums up the Biddulph tragedy. In *Geography Match,* which is a comedy, the deities of the environment are primarily nature gods of sea, land, river and light. To give in to a cancerous unredeemed materialism, and the spiritual darkness of cruelty, dishonesty and greed is to fail to gain passage to the sea; to love the land, to know and respect nature and develop one's own towards wisdom, love and fairness is to gain the god's favour and win. In Biddulph, the opposite is unfortunately true. The Donnellys somewhat like Rebecca, Polly and Kingbird, have the spiritual maturity to want

to get on with the natural cycles of love, fertility and growth; to fulfill this they flee to the wild, free, open lands of Canada where they hope to escape the malicious name-calling, bullying, and destructive pranks and games of the secret societies. However, as the other settlers begin to arrive, and such "gang" leaders as Cassleigh and Stub begin to take control of the new settlement, the old dark deities of night terrorism, vengeance, hatred, fear and spiritual sterility begin to poison the environment and beat down the fresh, natural spirit of the new land. As Mrs. Donnelly angrily charges:

> There's fields of grain to garner with bread for you all and you'd rather be thorns to each other. There's tables of food for you to eat and you won't come and sit down at them. Well, you won't sit down at them.[12]

Unfortunately, as willing or unwilling members of Biddulph, the Donnellys aren't allowed to sit down in peace either. In fact, given the "playground" mentality of much of the community, it is perhaps only natural that Reaney turns to children's games, the most structured and socially oriented form of child play, to portray the destructive social dynamics of Biddulph that entangle the Donnellys and drag them away from the "fields of grain" and "tables of food"[46] they long for.

Rising out of an unnatural man-made geography hostile to the natural contours of the virgin land, even the

physical formation of Biddulph is portrayed in terms of a child's game. Represented by a series of cats' cradles, "patterns made in a children's game in which string is wound and intertwined around the fingers",[47] the concessions, lots, farms and townships thus formed become the fingers around which the string of men's lives and fates are capriciously entwined by a government already insensitive to the natural spirit of the land. And unfortunately for the Donnellys this unnatural geography combines with a word of honour broken for material gain to suddenly and fatally ensnarl the Donnellys' line with their neighbours'.

This, in turn, forces the Donnelys to play endless games of tug-of-war over the land instead of getting on with the serious business of farming:

> *Farl and Mr. Fat place six chairs down the centre of the stage. A game develops in which Farl puts up the chairs, Donnelly takes them down again, or charges right through the fence with his harrow, etc... The fence game boils down to just the two of them, Farl and Donnelly, furiously putting up and upsetting chairs to stick, stone, reel sounds. There should be a menace scene here where all the Stones push all the Sticks back.*[48]

An attempt to pull the house down after the land is divided, similarly develops into "a contest... where Donnelly unhooks one chain and Farl hooks up the other that Donnelly has just unhooked."[49] An even later attempt

to flood the Donnellys becomes represented by "furious activity of plugging and unplugging."[50] The text establishes the seriousness and historical context of these games - but the visual action onstage, as with the riot scene at Keef's, underlines the childish pattern of behaviour beneath the surface reality.

Equally as destructive as the cats' cradles and tug-of-wars imposed on the Donnellys is the name-calling. Used by children on the playground to both wound and draw others into fights, the power of bad names to similarly destroy the peace of a whole community is first explored in *Names and Nicknames*. Dealing with the subject in a light, humorous vein, the damage in *Names* is restricted to a delayed education and marriage for the hired man, and the postponed christening of all the community's babies. In *Sticks and Stones*, by contrast, nicknames have the power to kill men, destroy families' reputations, and poison the psychic environment of a whole community. As Mr. Donnelly comments when his wife mentions the old adage about stick and stones breaking bones but names not harming them:

> Not true, Mrs. Donnelly. Not true at all.
> If only he'd hit us with a stick, but ever
> since that day you told me they'd been calling
> our son that in the churchyard it's as if a
> thousand little tinkly pebbles keep batting
> up against the windows of my mind just when
> it's a house that's about to sleep.[51]

Yet, even this awareness cannot save Mr. Donnelly from

making that one tragic mistake which will eventually cost him and his family their lives. Goaded by Fat's actions and Farl's constant harassment, Donnelly first resorts to name-calling himself ("Now, who's calling the names,"[52] Farl jeers), then shoots Farl in the arm and finally, in an impulsive gesture to remove the psychic as well as physical burden of Farl from his back, strikes the man dead. That one lapse into the enemy's territory is enough to pave the way for Stub and Cassleigh to change the pebbles rattling against the house of the mind into real stones thrown at real houses, through their own evil "tongues and words."[53]

The names not only kill Farl and make Donnelly into a criminal but also begin to eat away at the second generation of Donnellys. Donnelly himself, in hiding from the law may be forced to assume the woman's garb we saw the Whitefeet men wearing in earlier scenes, but he retains his essential spiritual integrity. At the end of the play under considerably greater provocation he has the opportunity to use the same gesture that killed Farl to destroy Cassleigh:

> Mr. Donnelly: Now - I'll beat your horses with this stick and they'll gallop off with your face down in the gravel. *Once he finds the stick, same gesture with it parallels the stick action in the scene with Farl.*[53]

Instead of whipping the horses onward, however, he pulls his helpless enemy free from the spokes of the wagon and pushes him back on the seat. Mrs. Donnelly too remains a tower of

spiritual integrity, her spiritual maturity being emphasized by the fact that she is constantly seen either pregnant or helping her children. It is precisely this adult spirituality which she brings to bear upon Cassleigh in the torture scene; in calling him by his first name and successfully demanding the knife from him as she would from a disobedient boy, she reveals Cassleigh for the emotional child he is. However, as we watch the seven years of prison passing by, we begin to see the younger Donnellys, like James and John beginning to fight back, in the enemies' coin of derogatory names, petty vandalism and fights. Even Will, with his musical and poetic insight, cannot stay entirely out of mischief. As Donnellys, the spirit behind their actions - the desire to rise above material or physical limitations, the loyalty to friends and family, the energetic love of life and land - remains true to their parentage; the questionable means they sometimes adopt or are forced to use, are not - and coming more naturally to their enemies, it will eventually be their enemies who win.

By the end of *Stick and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One), the personal and social patterns of Childish behaviour which will eventually culiminate in the Donnellys' destruction are already manifestly clear. It remains only to *The St. Nicholas Hotel (The Donnellys:* Part Two) and *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) to supply the devastating particulars which draw these patterns to their grim conclusion. Yet, if it can be said that the rest of the trilogy essentially elaborates and

expands on the patterns of events, character and theme developed in *Sticks and Stones*, then the same can also be said about the stagecraft of Part One in relationship to that of the other two parts of *The Donnellys*. And if *Sticks and Stones* is, in turn, indebted to Reaney's children's drama for many of the social designs that come to dominate the trilogy, then the debt is even stronger in regards to dramaturgy. For the staging style of *Stick and Stones* consists essentially of the three earlier lines of children's drama experimentation (four, counting the Listener's Workshop), as blended, heightened and refined by the children's workshops for *The Donnellys*, and the presence of a children's workshop-trained cast.

Again, one could try to catalogue the influence of the children's plays in terms of specific techniques from the puppet plays, the use of marionettes and shadow play; from the pre-Workshop children's drama represented by *Names and Nicknames*, the constant use of animal and object mime (fences, pigs, horses, carriages) as well as a protean chorus to supply communal and symbolic subtext to the action throughout the play; from the Workshop-influenced plays, *Ignoramus* and *Geography Match*, the historical-communal emphasis and the extensive use of enacted word lists of real places, people or events. This is less important, however, than how and why these techniques have been adapted to Reaney's dramatic purposes in *The Donnellys*.

In achieving his aim of presenting a "busy, intricate community" through the "three ring circus style" which allows for "the making of a statement on several levels at once...of several statements all at the same time,"[55] Reaney to some extent returns to a structure first experimented with in *Names* and sophisticated in *Wind*. Since the circus too is a form of children's theatre, it is not surprising, perhaps, to see *Sticks and Stones* using the *Names* and *Wind* technique of dividing the mythic and documentary levels of reality into separate lines of action which proceed in intense episodic bursts which comment on each other. In fact, the levels of reality present in the opening forest scene in *Stones* correspond closely to those presented in *Wind*. There is the mythic level, provided by the John Barleycorn song that appears, like the theme of the winds in *Wind*, or that of the seasons in *Names* throughout the play. It expresses in the figure of the personified barleycorn, the story - and tragedy - of the Donnellys in metaphysical fashion: that of a strong, fertile natural force that springs up defiantly again and again from beneath the cruel use and abuse of men, but is at last humiliatingly "pissed...against the wall".[56] It also expresses, by implication, the natural life of the seasons, with the warm vitality, fecundity and light of the spring and summer growing seasons inevitably giving way to the cold, sterility

and darkness of winter. As with Thorntree in *Names and Nicknames*, the Donnellys' antagonists are linked to the nihilistic spirit of winter, while the Donnellys, like the Dells, are connected with the warm spirit of summer and spring - both through the song, and later on, the metaphors in the text and visual metaphors onstage.

On another level, there is the realistic documentary level of the present in which Mrs. Donnelly is teaching Will his catechism for confirmation and giving him a fiddle for his birthday in the deep green of primeval forest. On yet a third level is the now imagined documentary realm of the past; an Ireland condensed by Mrs. Donnelly's mind into the sharp, abhorrent terms of remembered death, fire and persecution.

However, where in *Wind*, or even the more fluid *Colours*, these various levels would probably be presented sequentially as three different scenes, or, perhaps, as with Mr. Winemeyer's account of the horsemeat soup, as a scene broken by another and completed on the other side, in *Sticks and Stones*, these three levels, delicately interleafed, flow across the stage with a simultaneity that defies dividing the text neatly into separate scenes or episodes. We at once see Will and Mrs. Donnelly speaking in present documentary time (1855), see and hear the voices and actions of the past flash across the stage as she remembers and speaks of them, and over and

under this, hear stanzas of the barleycorn song which links the past and the present together into the greater tragic pattern of the Donnellys' fate:

Mrs. Donnelly: Were the boys calling you names in the churchyard then?

Will: Yes. They threw stones at me and they called me - Cripple. I'm used to that, mother, but there was a new boy there and do you want to know what he called me mother? *She nods* Blackfoot!... Cripple, I know. But what do they mean by Blackfoot?

Mrs. Donnelly: I suppose across the sea even it would come following us.

Will: What come following us, mother?

Enter Mr. Donnelly and stands with his back to us far upstage at the centre. The mob moves a step or two closer to the stage. As if made of forest branches and leaves behind them and above them, a silhouette map of Ireland appears towering on the back stage wall.

a step or two closer

Others: Then the farmer came with a big plough,
He ploughed me under the sod,
Then winter it being over
And the summer coming on,
Sure the barley grain shot forth his head
With a beard like any man.

Someone in a dress rolls a barrel on stage; "she" covers it with a sheet of rusty tin and then places on top of the tin a model of the Sheas' house. As "she" departs, two men disguised in dresses, bonnets and masks or veils strike matches and burn down the house. The fire makes their shadows grow into the branch map of Ireland. All this proceeds under Mrs. Donnelly's speech and illustrates it.[58]

If "intense imaginative work of either a flowing or stylized kind" is indeed, as Slade suggests,[59] an important attribute of child's play, then it may be possible to see

in this considerably more fluid flow of people, sound and action across the stage at least some of the results of Reaney's intensive work with children in the Listener's and *Donnelly* workshops. It also becomes apparent in *Sticks and Stones* what Reaney means when he talks about catching something of the power of musical forms through approaching drama in the proper spirit of childlike play. For, while the child's sharp aural awareness becomes manifested in the use of song, music, whistling, sound effects and chants as a form of rich, associative counterpoint to the main action onstage, the swift, fluid quality of his play makes possible a form of scenic counterpoint with two or even three separate strands of action simultaneously occupying the stage.

Sometimes, as in the opening scene, these strands of action constitute three different layers of reality all working at once. At other times, however, these strands simply constitute two or three realistic documentary events occurring at different places, and perhaps even different times in Biddulph. These scenes may occur all at once on different parts on the stage, but more often they delicately overlap, with one or more scenes materializing together or sequentially to cut across the focus of yet a third.

In practical terms, this overlapping and counterpointing of sequences serves Reaney's aim of producing a busy, intricate community onstage by allowing for

an even greater number of scenes to be portrayed onstage without breaking the essential flow of the action. Moreover, as in *Geography Match* and *Ignoramus*, this abundance of community action is firmly nailed into the actual documentary realm of Canadian place, time and event through an extensive shorthand of word lists. Consisting of actual place names, court records, census figures, names of settlers of the Protestant and Roman lines, church liturgy and even prices, these chanted and mimed lists do more than give a swift, sharp impression of the many places, times and people which make up the essence of nineteenth century Biddulph. They also lend a grim sense of immediacy to the destructive Childish patterns that dominate Biddulph. For all their malignancy, it is still possible to laugh at such regressed Child figures as Bethel, Madam Fay or the ladies of the Millbank ladies' institute, because they appear in the context of a half-fantasy, half-fairytale setting. It is considerably harder to laugh at the very real community of Biddulph, especially as Reaney continues to ruthlessly punch home through document after document, the rather terrifying knowledge that these people, these modes of thought and behaviour, and the consequences that result from them actually existed in the not so distant past.

Yet, if the child, and children's theatre influenced techniques of counterpoint, and word lists are further

refined and developed in *The Donnellys* to strengthen the documentary aspects of the plays, they are also employed in conjunction with the child's imaginative use of body, voice and objects to strengthen the metaphysical level of the action.

In contrast to the large amounts of metred poetry that Reaney uses in *Wind, Colours* and the early plays to express the more metaphorical aspects of his art, *Sticks and Stones* turns largely to an intricate form of stage imagery woven out of those designs and patterns born of "the child's delight" in "movement for fun and play" of "scribbling with your body/bodies."[60] This is, perhaps, no where more readily apparent than in the road to Goderich sequence which, in itself, is built on the journey pattern common to child's play.

In a stage direction, Reaney notes of the Donnellys' enemies the Fats that *"they have a certain on the ground quality which materializes everything while with the Donnellys there is just the opposite feeling."*[61] And indeed the ladders in the play are used, not only as in *Names* and *Wind* to represent imaginary objects or landscapes, but to additionally allow the Donnellys to make soaring upward motions in contrast to the generally ground-locked ones of their enemies. In this context, the Goderich sequence, while tracing the actual journey

Mrs. Donnelly makes from Biddulph to Goderich with her petitions, also becomes a metaphorical statement on the spiritual difference between the Donnellys, who as mature Child figures strive towards the natural growth and fructification of the land and spirit, and their enemies, who as regressed children tend towards a sterile and malignant materialism.

The stage instructions read:

> *The road from Biddulph to Goderich is represented by a series of short and long ladders held up firmly by the cast. Mrs. Donnelly climbs over these ladders. We hear road sounds - barking of dogs, etc. - that accompany her journey.*[62]

Meanwhile, on the other side of the stage, the arch-materialist and bully Stub, has already started "*the scaffold-building sequence with sticks and boards*".[63] Between the two of them, they portray the race between life and death for Mr. Donnelly's life, through a highly effective visual and aural counterpoint.

The race for life, portrayed by Mrs. Donnelly, is characterized by a soaring, upward motion as she climbs the ladders; Stub remains on the ground as the instrument of death - the scaffold - is slowly erected; this too may be a visually upward movement directed by Stub, but he is not himself a part of its upward motion, and it is a slow building towards death, not the upward soaring towards life. The dialogue on Mrs. Donnelly's side is

constructed in a solo/choral response form which recalls church litany; this in itself gives an aural impression of the spirituality and sacredness which well suits Mrs. Donnelly's pilgrimage to save her husband's life. Her speech, like her ladder-climbing motions also begin to soar towards poetry as she leave Biddulph, the imagery of dust, ghosts and violent mysterious death yielding to the liberating imagery of nature, seasons, the natural turn of the day toward dawn as she at last escapes the narrow, artificial limits of the township for the open roads beyond. Counterpointed against this, is Stub's sharp prosaic dialogue listing the material costs of building a scaffold to hang a man:

Stub:	Nine hundred feet of hemlock scantlings, $7 per M, $6.30.
Mrs. Donnelly:	Tollgate of the setting sun show me your latch.
Chorus:	Twilight rain on this roof from those clouds.
Mrs. Donnelly:	Falling down down as I sleep till the earth wheels.
Chorus:	Down to the dawn whose tollgate opens to all.
Mrs. Donnelly:	I'll pray for the dawn with these winter stars.
Chorus:	In the chill dark starting out before there were proper shadows.
Stub:	Detlor and Sons for nails, hinges and bolts $2.90.
Chorus:	Francistown Rogersville Henshall Kippen Brucefield Rattenbury's Clinton and turn
Mrs. Donnelly:	I'm on the Huron Road now and I turn next to
Chorus:	Holmsville where her member of parliament lived.[69]

The text itself conveys only a small part of the dramatic power of which this sequence and indeed *Sticks and Stones* as a whole is capable. However, as in *Colours, Wind* and the children's plays of the second period, it is a power that depends strongly on both actors and audience giving in to their own child-like powers of the imagination. The highly fluid, improvisatory and "playful" style of the staging, in conjunction with a script which works, as in *Colours*, on the subjectively distorted and fragmented level of a dream or memory, is in fact calculated to adjust the audiences' and actors' minds to that basic emotional, associative level of child's thought which is simultaneously more open to myth and metaphor and better able to view them side by side with a strict documentary reality.

What has changed is the speed and complexity at which the imaginations of audience and actors both must move. Reaney's confidence in finally finding a group of actors who are willing to "play" with him is reflected in both the text and cast list of *Sticks and Stones*. In *Wind*, ten actors were asked to play dual roles; in *Colours*, six actors played more than half a dozen apiece. In *Sticks and Stones*, eleven actors are called upon to play upwards of a hundred different people. They also assume all the functions opened by the children's choruses in *Names and Nicknames, Geography Match*, and *Ignoramus:*

the fluid animal and object mime, the metaphorical subtext running beneath the action, and the documental context of actual people, places and events driven home by mimed word lists. With a group of adult actors carefully sensitized to the "child-within" through morning workshops with children and afternoon ones where they approach the text "like children putting on plays",[65] it no longer seemed necessary to put real children on the stage. It also became possible to tighten the imaginative shorthand down even further so as to better accommodate the vast amount of time, character and action to be portrayed in under three hours. When David Ferry or James Reaney mention the presence of the children's workshops in the text in terms of sheer energy, quickness of movement and overall fluidity, they are speaking of no small contribution. For the script of *The Donnellys* assumes the presence of a whole company that can move with the uninhibited exuberance of sound and movement, the plasticity of identity and overall absorption of child's play. In *Listen to the Wind*, an antler, a certain arrangement of chairs or a carriage wheel is established as having a certain meaning which it then retains throughout the play. In *Sticks and Stones*, a barrel used to torture a man in one scene can suddenly become a hollow tree in the next; a ladder can become by turns, a club in the darkness, the roads of Biddulph, falling trees, church or court benches, house

windows or prison bars. In many cases, there is nothing to signal an audience as to the object's new identity save a reference in the dialogue, and significantly, the actors' own attitude and behaviour towards it. The same is also true of the many various identities the cast assumes in the course of the play; where one person can take on so many guises so swiftly, it is imperative that the actor not only believe firmly in the particular role he holds at that particular moment but that the other actors believe in it too. Here, the complete absorption and "intense imaginative work"[66] which Slade says characterizes child's play becomes particularly important. For, if an actor cannot imaginatively believe that the two sticks he is holding are actually a fiddle, that the actor he was relating to a moment ago as priest and penitent or Donnelly and Donnelly enemy, is now a fellow rioter at an inn, or fence post between farms, then it is unlikely that an audience will be able to believe it either.

Even with a cast that functions at top imaginative capacity, however, Reaney's script remains a considerable imaginative challenge to an audience. As in *Listen to the Wind*, he is willing to make some concessions to the audience's imaginative slowness. In Act One of *Sticks and Stones*, the Donnellys and their friends, rather like

Owen and his cousins, establish a number of key points of reference in the imaginative landscape of Biddulph including the Protestant line, the Roman line, and the church and Tavern on the latter line; in short, the roads of Biddulph, their meaning to the Donnellys and the stage conventions which will help represent them:

> *(At the back of the stage are raised five ladders... -their shadows and patterns matching the map of Biddulph which is a triangle)*
>
> Mr. Donnelly: Yes, those are the roads of Biddulph. I was one of the pathmasters for the Roman Line. My neighbours and myself for three days in the spring and three days in the late summer would dig and pick and scrape and shovel gravel so there'd be a smoother road for my enemies to come and club me, and these roads of Biddulph - you're right to see them as ladders, yes, ladders we crawled up and down on and up other ladders - up to Goderich for justice, down to London to pay our rent.
>
> *(The ladders have been laid before Mr. Donnelly and he uses their rungs to illustrate.*[67]*)*

However, in many other cases, the audience is simply asked to infer identity of place, person or event through the context of the speech and the actors' own imaginative action or response.

At the speed and complexity with which the play moves, this is quite a demand. And Reaney increases his demands even further by asking the audience not merely

to enter fully into the psychic life of a single sick boy, but that of a whole community perceiving the same events and people through a dizzying variety of perspectives coloured by emotion, hindsight and personal bias. In short, the audience has to accustom itself to viewing a vast array of remembered or "dreamed" times, places and realities constantly "crossing" each other like the St. Patrick cross design Reaney says the children's workshops help give rise to. Thus, like the ghost of Mrs. Donnelly "wandering through, crossing times and places"[68] as it pleases, we too can simultaneously watch that past evening of July 29, 1865 - as young Tom Donnelly carves his and young Feeney's names on their arms - and see from backstage, the Medicine Show of the future, portraying Feeney's later betrayal:

> *They (chorus) move upstage where they face us as the audience of the Medicine Show. Their candles are its footlights. The Donnelly house lies between us and the stage of the show. Stub becomes the Showman counting his take; besides focusing on him we look too at the front gate of the Donnelly house where Tom and Jim Feeney prepare their scene.*[69]

Moreover, while the Donnelys retain the strongest grip and control over the action in *Stick and Stones* it is also clear that they do not exert the same ultimate imaginative control over the action of even this play, that Owen, and the unnamed boy-poet exert in *Wind* and

Colours. In the case of the two latter plays, the imaginative dream or "play" world the audience is asked to enter is one ultimately created and shaped by a young mind in response to an aching spiritual need in his real world. The Donnellys also may remember and dream, but it is not for their own spiritual benefit. Like Angela of Caresfoot Court, or Sal and Winemeyer of *Colours*, they are essentially what they are. And, by the end of *Stick and Stones*, there is nothing left for them to do but stand their ground and die on it because of what they, and because of what their enemies, unswervingly are. As Jennie implies in one of her closing speeches, one is essentially born a Donnelly:

> Because from the courts of Heaven when you're there you will see that however the ladders and sticks and stones caught you and bruised you and smashed you, and the bakers and brewers forced you to work for them for nothing, from the eye of God in which you will someday walk you will see...that once long before you were born,...you chose to be a Donnelly and laughed at what it would mean... You laughed and lay down with your fate like a bride, even the miserable fire of it... Because you were tall; you were different and you weren't afraid, that is why they burnt you first with their tongues then with their kerosene.[30]

If the Donnellys' consciousness does not form the outer perimeters of the dreams anymore than Angela or Sal's does, then the implication seems to be that Reaney expects the audience itself to function as the Owen or

boy-poet in the *Donnelly* dramas. As he himself comments:

> with three events at once, fragments of sounds, comments coming from all sides of the stage area - as presenters we can give the listener and spectator a good workout for his agilities in making up his own circus, his own play.[71]

Thus, like the drunken boy in *Handcuffs* who falls into a stupor in the graveyard, we too are dreaming of the Donnellys and have a chance to remove the "handcuffs" from our own minds, by descending into the past with them and letting their consciousness become ours for a time. Certainly the Donnellys' control over the action in *Sticks and Stones* gives them something of a "headstart" in this regard. Yet, ultimately, the trilogy is our own "dream" and we ourselves must reach our own conclusions from the many varying perspectives and realities we are asked to enter imaginatively into during the play. Whether we come away from this "play" world convinced, like Mrs. Taylor, that we have just participated in a silly old story made rather fun by the actors' innovative stagecraft, or whether, like Owen, we carry away a new life sustaining myth, a new way of viewing the personal and communal patterns in our own lives depends on us.

This long discussion of *Sticks and Stones*, the least "realistic" and most consciously theatrical of the three plays or parts of the trilogy, is justified by the

fact that it presents in sharper, clearer terms both the stagecraft, and the basic psychological, social and mythic patterns that will dominate the other two plays, and indeed, *The Donnellys* as a whole. In fact, it may be said that if *Sticks and Stones* in many ways corresponds to the equally important first Act of *Listen to the Wind* in introducing the basics of characterization and staging, then *The St. Nicholas Hotel* corresponds to the second Act of *Wind* in which all these elements work with greater complexity. Moreover, even as Act II of *Wind* increasingly focuses the action in the imaginative Caresfoot Court world with the faith that we can more easily relate it to the play's mythic and realistic realities on our own, *Hotel* increasingly centres its action in the real world of the 1870's with the faith that we can now on our own relate the action to the larger documentary and mythic patterns revealed in *Sticks and Stones*.

In psychic terms, *The St. Nicholas Hotel (The Donnellys:* Part Two) is a much more "crowded" play than *Stones*, the mental as well as the physical landscape now having been cut up, confined and settled by various people. Thus, while *St. Nicholas* covers only six years of action in Biddulph (1873-1879) in contrast to the thirty or more portrayed in *Sticks and Stones*, it is a

six years during which the schemings, mechanisms, thoughts and perspectives of Biddulph have increased ten-fold, largely at the expense of the Donnellys, and the natural spirit of the land inherent in the barleycorn song.

While their perspective is still dominant in the action, it is clear, if only from the fact that they do not step in to direct or control the action as often as they do in *Stones*, that the Donnellys are slowly being crowded out, driven back by the regressed children of Biddulph. It is a process greatly abetted by the arrival of James Carroll on the scene. A direct spiritual and physical descendent of the Fats, Carroll is, at one point, ruthlessly exposed by Will Donnelly as the malicious child he is. Even as Mrs. Donnelly earlier disarms Cassleigh through the force of her spiritual maturity, so does Will disarm Carroll, speaking to him as if he were a small child ("give me that whip of yours there before you hurt yourself with it."[72]) He further forces Carroll to expose his childish nature through ordering him to "dance" out his wretched, jealousy blotted scrawl of a signature in contrast to Will's own strong, elegant one. (Probably influenced by the Workshop technique of having children expressively mime words or even just letters, this signature-dance sequence is one scene, Reaney notes that "children watching...just accept...;

their parents have difficulties. And so would the actors if there hadn't been some preparation in opening the mind to myth and metaphor...that the young are frequently very sophisticated in."[73]) Unfortunately, this encounter takes place in the form of a dream had by Carroll long after the massacre. Thus, it may be true that in the nature of dreams or play, this sequence expresses a significant spiritual truth in metaphorical terms: that Carroll's childish malignancy and envy have reduced him to total insignificance in the vast Eternal realm of the spirit to which the Donnellys, like Owen, are heir. However, in the documentary world of late nineteenth century Biddulph that *St. Nicholas* concerns itself with these qualities make him a big man. In fact, this infinitely malignant Child becomes the main instrument through which the malicious and materialistic energies of the whole community become catalysed in Act III into the sudden violent murder of Michael Donnelly and the subsequent plot to kill the rest of the family.

Equally chilling, both in itself and in the bearing it has on the eventual destruction of the Donnelly's, is the fact that the poisonous quagmire of Biddulph has begun to seriously corrode the second generation of Donnellys themselves. Only hinted at in *Sticks and Stones*, the corrosion bears bitter fruit here, particularly in

the figure of James Jr. who has become in illness, almost a child again:

> Mrs. Donnelly: Your father's late home from the fair. Maybe he'll bring you something James though you're a trifle big and old for a bauble... He's coming into the yard this very minute and if you're not quiet and good I'll tell him on you.[74]

He has become a child again, however, in an even more unfortunate sense. The sense of "fair play" and loyalty to family are all Donnelly; the malicious, destructive form that that loyalty and sense of justice take is in keeping with the childish spirit of vengeance and hatred manifested by the Donnelly enemies in Part One:

> James: I'm only feeding him the ones we didn't do, Frank. This one here - I'll eat myself, yes I did beat that grocer up and I couldn't stand the way he whined and whoever is doing all those terrible things on these warrants will stop doing them. Frank, when the powers that be let my brothers have half the road again.[75]

The same is to a lesser extent true of the younger Donnellys like Robert and Tom. Where Mrs. Donnelly has the spiritual insight to sense what John, Mike and Will know that McCrimmon is not the simple tramp he seems, Bob and Tom are completely taken in by the deception. The high spirits, love of life and loyalty to friends

is again true to the breed, the diminished spiritual awareness and mildly destructive "mischief" the boys become involved in is not. To be sure, James Carroll and Tom Ryan are responsible in part for the "parade of little mischievous things" that begin to plague the township but the stage instructions indicate that Tom Donnelly is also one of the trio "*with cheesecloth over face*" who "*play tricks, steal props from chairs, spin tops illegally, pick pockets, gallop up and down the road after they've* [Roman Line] *gone asleep, snoring.*"[76]

In the face of these Childish forces of destruction and maliciousness gathering unwittingly within, and deliberately outside of the Donnelly faction, the elder Donnellys and the sons most possessed of their original uncorrupted spirit, Mike, Will and John, still manage to take a strong defiant stand. Mike and Will in particular move into the romantic and financial aspects of Biddulph life with a sheer vitality and strength of spirit which is almost a match for the personal malice and gang-like delusions of superiority and overwhelming greed of their enemies. However, like the Blazer team of *Geography Match*, whom they resemble in spirit, these enemies are prepared to resort to any means possible to push their opponents out of the "race" both in personal and social terms. Moreover, where the Blazers, under the influence of

Coyote/Light are compelled to mend their ways or not finish the journey, the opposite happens in *St. Nicholas Hotel*. Like their parents before them, Will and Mike are soon forced to play the same silly, destructive games as their enemies - arson, vandalism, "the game of information and complaint or Legal Amusements"[77] - to hold their place on the road. And in courting and trying to retain his first love, Maggie, Will has to resort to night time trickery and deception - like the shivaree or the letters beneath the floor boards - more appropriate to Whitefoot terrorism than the pursuit of a true and honorable love.

However, where the older Donnellys manage to retain at least half the farm, and Mrs. Donnelly *does* save her husband from Stub's mechanisms and the hangman, the boys lose the road, Will loses Maggie, and Nellie and Mrs. Donnelly are powerless, for all their love, to prevent Mike from losing his life.

The nature of the grim yet losing battle fought between the Donnellys and their neighbours in *St. Nicholas Hotel* is largely expressed in terms of yet other techniques or patterns adapted from the children's workshops and drama.

Particularly effective in terms of *The St. Nicholas Hotel* is Reaney's combination of the journey and circle motifs common to child's play. As in *Listen to the Wind*, wheels are used with some modifications to convey the

the presence of actual carriages or stagecoaches racing each other and even colliding on the roads of the township. Yet, in the context of *St. Nicholas*, the wagon wheel and its onwards circular motion also become a metaphysical suggestion of the Donnellys' more positive spiritual quality. Even as Dr. Maguire, the pro-Donnelly minister, uses a Biblical passage on the sanctity of wheels to drive away the arch-materialist Stub, so does the stagecoach, Will's "bird with wheels"[78] raise Will above the material limitations of his lame foot and carry Mike and him away from the narrow bigoted boundaries of Biddulph.

The Donnelly boys' affinity for wheels and for travelling the free open roads and countryside beyond Biddulph is in many ways only a more prosaic reflection of the same heightened spiritual quality displayed in Mrs. Donnelly's own journey to Goderich in *Stones*. As such, the connection between wheels, journeys and the Donnellys' own brand of spirituality is only strengthened by Mrs. Donnelly's making yet another essential journey for life and family, this time using a *"Listen to the Wind wheel and horse with Mrs. Donnelly running behind."*[71] Yet, if the wheel thus used establishes the Donnellys as a spiritual force of high calibre, wheels also ironically portray the family's steadily weakening hold in Biddulph. Not only has this second journey of

Mrs. Donnelly's lost the clear upward soaring of language and motion that distinguishes the Donnellys from their ground-locked enemies in *Stones*, but the onwards sweep of her carriage wheel finds a strong negative counterpoint in the futile static spinning of Mary Donovan'a spinning wheel.

Since the spinning motion is the one most associated with the Childish enemies of the Donnellys, it is perhaps appropriate that the object most often used to convey this negative circular movement is a child's toy itself. Like the poetic tops in *The Killdeer I*, the actual tops in *St. Nicholas* convey a destructive whirling action that has the power to corrupt even carriage wheels into instruments of death and destruction as the bitter fight between Donnellys and anti-Donnellys escalates. As Mrs. Donnelly notes while she spins the top, that promised "bauble" for James that Mr. Donnelly has brought from the fair:

> It would be nice to stop, but we can't oh no
> we must keep on spinning and spinning
> Mr. Donnelly, because if we stop spinning we'll
> fall down and over and we hit them and they hit
> us and we - one day - our whip-arm's broke off.[80]

The use of a child's toy not only emphasizes the childish origins of the hit-and-hit-back game the Donnellys are forced to play but serves as an omen of death in Mike's scene at the end of the train journey. Ironically,

it is an argument over whether Mike is treating Greenwood fairly in their top-spinning game that "Lewis" uses as an excuse to start the fatal and "unfair" confrontation he has with Mike. Killed because of a child's game, it is indeed as Mrs. Donnelly says, "a stupid life and death they've fastened"[81] on Mike.

If the journey and circle motifs of child's play are adapted to effective use in *St. Nicholas*, the same is true of another aspect of child's play: animal mime. As Reaney notes in "Kids and Crossovers":

> In this part of *The Donnellys* there is a great deal of human beings changing into animals; for example, Patricia Ludwick *is* a racehorse called Lord Byron in the racetrack scene and quite soon after this the entire cast turn into horses of the Donnelly farm being trained not be afraid of umbrella and fiddle sounds. It seems to me that that sort of thing is easier *if* you've been to the morning workshops.[82]

Yet, if the morning workshops helped train Reaney's actors develop a child-like capacity for assuming animal identity, they may also have given Reaney himself the confidence to create a form of stage poetry out of animal mime as well as ladders and carriage wheels. For, the animal mime used in *St. Nicholas* is essentially a combination of two earlier lines of animal imagery used. One is the passive textual imagery of the early plays which reinforces the negative or positive spiritual status of

the characters by comparing them to an appropriate animal. Vernelle, for instance, is called a vulture while Budge and Gardner describe themselves as carrion hens. The second line is the active animal mime of the children's choruses in *Names, Colours* and *Wind* which contributes a rich animal life to the action and imaginary landscape of the play. In *St. Nicholas,* animal mime is adapted to cover both functions; not only do the actors become animals as needed, but in doing so they also sharply register an awareness in the audience's mind of the metaphoric animals working within the human forms and actions of Act I. For, in having to imaginatively perceive human actors as the actual horses and cows of Biddulph, we may be more sensitive to seeing the people of Biddulph themselves in terms of metaphoric horses and cows.

The Donnellys, for instance, are definitely horse people. They not only have a quick intuitive love for the animals but their training methods with the people-as-horses call instantly to mind the way the elder Donnellys have tried to raise human beings: with great love and patience, in order to instill a similar spirit of love and fearlessness in them. It is a similarity that Will recalls when he reproaches Mike for not holding his head up after the road accident:

> And Mike. I also got our father to train our horses so well that when Brooks' passenger that was riding beside him fell directly in front

> of us you were able to stop those horses on a penny, or he'd been cut to pieces instead of standing over there gawping at the Donnelly brothers whose same father failed to train one of his sons still to hold up his head though all the world is thinking you should crawl.[83]

The identification between the Donnellys and their horses was further accentuated in the first production by having the same actress who played Mrs. Donnelly, the strong maternal source of the Donnelly clan also portray Lord Byron, the progenitor of all the horses the Donnellys will use on their stagecoach line. Both have bred true, producing strong, handsome, intelligent creatures bred to high spirits, a strong virility and an inherent joy in running.

Similarly, a mimed portrayal of cows coming to the gate to greet one of the Donnellys' travellers helps establish the basic personality of people like the Egans, Donovans (save Maggie) and Stubs. The pro-Donnelly minister, Dr. Maguire, tells his daughter about a dream in which "the five families that consider themselves the aristocracy of the village" turned into sheep with "George Stub, the biggest ram of them all, gnawing away at my leg."[84] As with most dreams, this one expresses a metaphoric truth about the waking world. Like the live-stock they associate themselves closely with, these people are on the whole, stupid, down-to-earth creatures bred and sold for material gain and use. Moreover, in

contrast to the Donnellys whose horses are well-trained servants directed firmly by mind, hand and heart, some members of this "aristocracy" have let their beasts become their spiritual masters. Certainly there is something extremely cow-like about Mr. Donovan as he sits with his feet in the water and demands Maggie to keep "switching the flies off of me, will you?"[85] There is something even more cow-like about Mary Egan, the "proper sort,"[86] marrying Mr. Donovan's son. Even her new husband becomes "a young bull"[87] in her eyes, and Bill Donovan complains that "Your mother and my father put us together like a pair of cattle."[88] George Stub and Mercilla are slightly more sophisticated but there is no doubt they are "buying" each other like livestock: their romance is a business bargain with Mercilla supplying respectability and Stub, money and social status.

It is precisely this repulsive form of animal mating that Maggie Donovan rejects in favor of the strongly virile yet spiritually deep love Will offers her. She has, in turn, an implicit bird imagery about her that connects her spirit and fate to that of the Donnellys as expressed in *Handcuffs*. As one of the stage instructions in *St. Nicholas* reads:

> *In a necessary manoeuvre we can't see, the Donnelly Stage goes around the hotel, so that it circles the barroom and Maggie follows it inside in a circular birdlike, trapped motion.*[89]

The metaphor is further strengthened by the fact that her family nets her like a bird when she attempts to flee to Will. This entrapment, looks forward in turn to the bird mime in *Handcuffs* where *"Birds attack the different bird and kill her and him with chirping sounds."*[90] Like Mrs. Donnelly whose arm-wings are clipped in Act III of *Handcuffs* and Bridget who describes her heart as being "like a bird that has flown from nest", but finds death with her kin instead of freedom, Maggie too has dared to become too "different" to tolerate. Stripped of love and freedom both for tyring to become a Donnelly, her and Will's failure to bring their love to the full physical and spiritual consummation of marriage is one of the most tragic episodes in *St. Nicholas*. The horse imagery associated with Will not only gives their illicit courting the intensity of strong natural drives and desires cruelly thwarted but gives Maggie's dying statement, "I love Will Donnelly"[92] an almost unbearable sadness: both because of the "world of power and love"[93] she has been cheated of, and because of the very scarcity of the word "love" in a community where people insist on breeding themselves like livestock instead of human beings.

In *Sticks and Stones*, Reaney uses word lists composed of actual historical documents, records and newspaper articles to drive into an audience's consciousness a strong documentary sense of time and place. At the same

time, he also heightens the spectators' awareness of the mythic or metaphysical verities in the action, through a form of stage poetry composed of visual and aural counterpoint as well as an imaginative use of props and body. While also making use of these techniques, *St. Nicholas* adapts them somewhat to the stronger documentary focus of the play.

For instance, in getting his audience involved deeply in the highly complex social, financial, political and personal whirl of Biddulph between 1873 and 1879, Reaney does more than just use word lists and overlapping scenes. He also resorts strongly to an almost creative drama or participatory children's theatre technique in getting the audience, like the actors to play a number of varying people or perspectives in the Biddulph community. For instance, Finnegan's attitude towards us in the opening stage scene establishes us as perspective customers waiting for a coach. At another moment, Carroll warns us not to rent our farms or offer any rides to Mrs. Donnelly. (*"He menaces the whole theatre; we are afraid of him."*[94]) Then he accuses us of using him. ("You people here'd used me like a piece of dirty paper to wipe the Donnellys off your backsides."[95]) In the third act, we become, at one moment, an onlooker with the Donnellys looking out at the cow-hunting mob of people (*"A roar as they find Tom Ryan. They rush onstage with him and now we and the Donnellys look out at the mob."*[96]) In another moment,

we are part of the mob ourselves. (*"Whispers offstage under the audience. We are part of the mob*[97] *... We should feel ashamed of ourselves that we did not make a better showing against a lame man and two women"*[98])

At the same time, as members of the Biddulph community, we now no longer have quite the same omniscience of vision we shared with Mrs. Donnelly's ghost in *Sticks and Stones*. As with other characters in *St. Nicholas*, our main link to the higher realm of spiritual verities is the imaginative dream. Even as Carroll perceives metaphorically through a dream the emptiness of his own soul; Maguire, the essentially livestock-like nature of his main parishoners; and James Jr. the imminence of his own death, we too are "dreaming" out with the help of the characters a true metaphorical vision of Biddulph. Like Michael, remembering a certain important race (*"an announcer with a megaphone ...should blur his voice under and over the other levels ...[to] get the effect of a real racetrack"*[99]) we too are "dreaming of horses and wagons going up the hill" which at once have a vital concrete life of their own yet remain but "dust and words in the stream of time we all lie dreaming in."[100]

As in *Colours*, *Wind* and even *Stones*, Reaney takes advantage of the links between play, dream and imaginative thought to bring his audience's mind back to the child's emotional, associative level of thought which is more

awake to symbol and metaphor. However, where the "dreams" of *Wind* and *Colours* are constructive ones actively controlled by the "dreamer's" waking imagination, the "dream" which is *St. Nicholas* is ultimately a strange and terrifying one. In fact, Reaney combines the journey motif, the use of aural and visual counterpoint and an earlier train convention with a skill that endows the whole of Act III leading to Mike's death with the chilling power of a recurrent nightmare that the "dreamer" is helpless to prevent, control or turn away from.

For Mrs. Donnelly, Nellie and ourselves, this dream takes the form of a train, which, as in child's play and dreams both, carries a wealth of metaphoric and mythic meaning under its literal surface. Thus, while an array of lanterns, whistles, lights and crossbucks acts, as in *Wind* or *Match* as an imaginative shorthand for an actual train - the one that Mike rides during his last journey as a brakeman - it also instantly becomes in terms of the dream motif established in *St. Nicholas*, something infinitely more powerful and threatening. For Mrs. Donnelly, the dream takes the form of a recurring premonition of approaching death, a train that can be stopped by the Donnellys' courage in the daytime but rolls onwards towards disaster as night falls:

Mrs. Donnelly: The air was so hollow you could hear things far away that night. Or did I dream it that first I was on a coach and then a train and I was taking an empty coffin to a tavern where they were going to kill one of my sons.[101]

For Nellie, as for Jennie in *Sticks and Stones*, the dream has the horror of a recurring nightmare after the fact:

> Yes, I understand - that in the months before my husband was murdered in the barroom at Slaght's Hotel - there was a train, there was another sort of train that started out just after that election 1878 and every crossing it blew its whistle for was a crossing that was closer to my husband's death, and I wish I could be clear in my own mind what that First Crossing was but I think I can see you there in cold blood talking about how you'll kill him and I run towards you to stop you but I meet the glass of mystery and time and trickery. I fall down and only know that I must listen for all the other four crossings Mike's train whistled for before the last time he walked out of the rain.[102]

The flashing of the train signals during the action of the third act thus simultaneously conveys the real train that Mike travelled that fateful evening of December 9, 1879, the metaphorical train of actual schemes and events building inexorably to the death of Mike and the mythic black train of Night and spiritual darkness that will finally sweep away the Donnellys and their light.

There is also a train journey in *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three), the former simultaneously

constituting the third of the major journeys that Mrs. Donnelly enacts during the trilogy. However, in contrast to the poetry and soaring of the ladder journey, and the swift rolling wheels and heightened prose of the second, this third is a very quiet, naturalistic train ride with the Chorus, as in *Geography Match* and *Colours*, miming the train and calling out the stations on the way. This stripping of the train ride, and the journey motif itself, of the strong metaphoric power they contain in Parts One and Two of *The Donnellys* is only one of many indications that Biddulph has fully slipped into a winter of the spirit as well as the land. Like the whiskey in Theresa O'Connors' shebeen, the warm vital spirit of the barleycorn has been pushed, by the cold, sterile forces of Biddulph's "respectable" citizenry, into a wintry darkness of ill-repute, ostracization and soon, extinction.

As in *Sticks and Stones* and *St. Nicholas*, the childish patterns of behaviour underlying the persecution and final massacre of the Donnellys, are made eminently clear, once more, by techniques or devices borrowed from child's play or drama. The child's toy, the hobbyhorse, for instance, becomes in many ways as significant a sign of the destructive childish forces working within and without the Donnelly camp, as the toy tops in *St. Nicholas* and the childish nick names and tug-of-war games in *Stones*.

The hobbyhorses Tom Donnelly and Jim Feeny ride during their demolition of Glass' tavern, for instance, carry much of the same weight as the sticks and stones used in the riot scene at Keefe's tavern in *Stones*. Again, the loyalty to family and friends Tom displays is characteristic of the Donnelly spirit, but the tendency towards childish mischief is not. Rather like the rioters in *Stones*, Tom and his friends see themselves as simply indulging in a little high-spirited fun justified by a slur against their faction's honour. But, the damage they do to the tavern is real and will help bring disaster down on the heads of the Donnellys just as surely as Tom Ryan's "helpful" little pranks do in *St. Nicholas*.

The bishop's association with hobbyhorses also seems to suggest a similar pattern of childish behaviour beneath his urbane sophistication:

> *Organ peals as curtains part to reveal Bishop preceded by proud hobbyhorsemen drawing him in his carriage.*[67]

His political "games" are undoubtedly a great deal more sophisticated than Tom and Jim's antics, but they are just as surely a form of childish unthinking mischief. Though pleasurable enough to the instigator, these "games: similarly cause a great deal of real damage and pain that the Bishop is only vaguely aware of from the Olympian heights of his "ladder." Unlike the Vigilantes,

he does not consciously set the Donnellys up for slaughter. However, like a little boy who experimentally trusses up a cat and is greatly disappointed because it scratches instead of becoming more docile, he simply walks off leaving the helpless animal prey to the attacking "pack of wild dogs"[68] Father Girard speaks of.

The use of hobbyhorses also exposes the O'Hallorans for the children they are beneath all their assumed airs and pretensions to social and moral superiority. However, as founding members of the Peace society organized and headed by Carroll to destroy the Donnellys, they are part of a much more dangerous manifestation of the Childish mentality. In fact, the *"model of the Donnellys' curtilage (house, outbuilding and barn...set fire to and burning now by two Vigilante 'ladies' with torches* [105]" in Act III of *Handcuffs* is an almost startling flashback to one of the initial images in *Stones* where "*two men disguised in dresses, bonnets and masks or veils...strike matches and burn down the house*"[106] of the Sheas. This visual linkage reinforced by the verbal one of Mary Donovan singing over the burning farm model the old childhood taunt she used against young Will in *Stones*, does more than connect the final disaster, in an emotional, associative manner, to those old hatred and prejudices the Donnellys fled to Canada to avoid. It also reinforces the impression that the same childish malicious mentality

that dominated the Whitefoot also dominates the Vigilantes as well.

This is driven home with particular force in *Handcuffs* through an extensive use of puppetry. It is true that Reaney to some extent draws upon the allegorical and visually evocative talents of the puppet in the other two Parts of *The Donnellys* as well. In *Sticks and Stones*, for instance, Reaney suggests that marionettes be used for Lord and Lady Head to suggest their distance and sense of unreality from the perspective of Biddulph.[107] Moreover, Reaney ruthlessly satirizes the conventional view of the Donnellys perpetrated by such writers as Thomas Kelley, through presenting the latter's version in the large, grotesque terms of the medicine show, a human form of theatre closely related to the puppet genre. It may also be said that Tim Corcoran's status as Stub's puppet in *St. Nicholas Hotel* is quickly and sharply conveyed by having the candidate actually portrayed as a marionette at the public meeting.

In *Handcuffs*, however, puppetry, like animal mime in *St. Nicholas* becomes expanded from an occasional isolated technique into a pervasive form of stage poetry. Since puppetry is in itself a form of child's theatre, it is only appropriate that the shadow puppetry of *Handcuffs* becomes closely associated with the Peace society and their activities. It is, in fact, significant that

Reaney dramatically portrays the essential nature of a secret society through two little boys who *"are always playing with the shadows they can produce with a candle and cut out cardboard figures"*.[108] The child's answer to his friend about what a secret society does is echoed by the chorus in such a way that it establishes a strong link between the child's play and the Biddulph Peace Society's. For, in the context of the Chorus' comments, the cardboard figures become not just children's toys, but the actual shadows of the men plotting to kill the Donnellys:

> Johnny: They say there's a secret society formed against the Donnellys.
> Pat: What's a secret society, Johnny?
> *(Dr. Jerome O'Halloran enters. The boys retreat behind the l/2 drawn Stage Right Curtain.)*
> Johnny: Well Pat, its swear drink midnight attack
> Chorus: swear drink midnight attack.[109]

The two-dimensional shadow portrayals of the society tormenting Will's horses, gambling for Tom's old clothes, and even sneaking up and murdering both John and the other Donnellys do more than just reinforce the childish motivation behind the society's actions however. They also suggest the extremely shady dark nature of these men's activities, and the dangerous blurring of individuality, the simple, shallow, unsubtle mentality that results when people become a mob. Even the curtains upon which these shadows are projected become a metaphorical expression

of the same truth. Functioning on a literal documentary level as the curtains created to hide Theresa's illegal shebeen, the drapery also becomes, as in the Father Connolly-Mrs. Donnelly scene and subsequent murder trials, those metaphoric veils of deception, deliberate spiritual blindness and dark secretive scheming the Donnellys' enemies draw about themselves and their actions. Moreover, drawing upon puppetry's natural connection, as a form of child's theatre, to a mythic perception of reality, these shadow men also become expressive of the powers of spiritual Night steadily creeping forward to extinguish the bright, revealing daylight associated with the Donnellys.

The imminent triumph of the regressed children of the community is also conveyed by the psychic landscape of *Handcuffs* itself. For, in the latter play, the strong creative essence of the human spirit manifested in *Sticks and Stones* through the highly metaphoric nature of the play and the Donnellys' dominance has been buried or obscured beneath a plethora of events, facts, schemes and surface realities. This larger emphasis on the purely documentary mechanisms and happenings in the Biddulph community can in many ways be seen as an indication of the earthbound, materialistic mentality of the minds that now dominate the trilogy. Yet, the malicious side of the childish mentality can be seen by the fact that

many of these schemes and mechanisms perpetrated by the Vigilantes are bent not only at destroying the Donnellys, but at deliberately destroying in themselves and others, a true spiritual perception of what they are killing in their own souls and community by murdering the family. Both elements, the materialistic and the malicious, working together continue to make the psychic landscape of Biddulph at once the most documentarily and most psychically complex of the three plays. This complexity can to some extent be seen by the fact that given the same amount of stage time as the other two Parts, *Handcuffs* covers only two years of chronological time in Biddulph in contrast to the thirty odd years of *Stones* and the six of *St. Nicholas*. Yet, as the fateful year leading up to the massacre and the fateful year of trials following the latter, it is a two years upon which all the "dreaming" minds of Biddulph, and we with them, have become intensely focused. This constant experiencing and re-experiencing of a common event or situation from a variety of different perspectives may be seen, in turn, to be a particularly sophisiticated development of the common creative drama technique of having participants assume several identities during the same exercise in order to imaginatively explore the same activity or situation from different perspectives. (In this context, one finds particularly intriguing Ferry's comment that while the actors were eventually assigned

specific roles or characters, during the afternoon Workshop with Reaney, they played all the characters interchangeably as required.[110] While it is difficult to assess the influence this technique, probably borrowed from the children's Workshop, had on the structure of *Handcuffs*, it can be said safely that insofar as the latter play was written with the NDWT Comapny and their imaginative capacities as displayed in the workshops, in mind, then the technique had at least an indirect influence on the script.)

The sum total of all these widely varying fragments of perspective may be a thorough and disturbing understanding of the massacre and the Childish social, personal and political dynamics that cause it. At the same time, however, the sheer number of perspectives and memories overlapping, crowding, cutting across each other onstage creates a suffocating (and sometimes, as in the Wake sequence, thoroughly nightmarish) sense of psychic density that makes us long for the strong, natural spirit of the land and the Donnellys that dominates in *Sticks and Stones*. However, the Donnelly perspective itself has been suffocated into near impotence, and no minds of similar spiritual status have arisen to guide the action. For, the same weight of malicious Childish mechanisms that are choking the Donnellys, have also choked the spiritual insight and growth of the community as a whole,

leaving the latter in a fragmented tangle of spiritual blindness or malevolence.

As in *St. Nicholas*, the circle pattern of child's play is once more adapted to express this truth. The series of plots, events and circumstances which actually lead to the Donnellys' deaths, for instance, is seen by Reaney as possessing the negative circular form of handcuffs:

> *Like slowly closing handcuffs people (priests, bishops, constables, farmers, tavern keepers, traitors, threshers, among others) openly and secretly, legally and illegally fasten the disturbing Donnelly family still so that it can murder them... Tuesday, 3 February, 1880.*[111]

And it is true that if one visualizes the personal, social, political and religious lines of action developed in Act I as one arm of the handcuffs, then the completion of each of these lines in an ominous manner in Act II can be visualized as the snapping shut of the other arm into the confining circle of the handcuffs surrounding the Donnellys.

Even more importantly, however, the whole psychic action of the play takes on the negative circular motion of the top or spinning wheel, the vast array of minds, memories and perspectives fighting for expression in the drink, emotion and memory charged atmosphere of Biddulph 1880, spinning in dizzying, overlapping circles around the

solid, sordid core of the Donnellys' murder, wake, funeral and burial.

Without the dominant spiritual leadership of the Donnellys, *Handcuffs* relies more heavily on the audience's spiritual resources to derive a cohesive and creative vision for themselves out of the spinning whirl of fragmented perceptions in front of them. It is as though having led us like psychic Children ourselves from an initial view of Paradise (the warm, fertile spirit of the Donnellys and the new land) through the Fall (settling of Biddulph, Farl's murder in *Stones*) and deep into the dark, confusing vales of Experience (*St. Nicholas*, *Handcuffs*) Reaney now stands aside to let us decide the ending to our own psychic journey.

Perhaps, like the Medicine Show actors, the worst of the Donnellys' enemies and the drunk, sensation-seeking toughs in the graveyard, we retain psychic "handcuffs" on our own minds; refusing to look beyond their "popular" image as vindictive, hellish old harridans and barnburners we still see the family, at worst, as inhuman monsters who had to be destroyed, and, at best, a good source of income or cheap thrills.

Perhaps on another level, by responding imaginatively to the creative drama-like appeal to become members of the community in nineteenth century Biddulph, and the mound of historical facts, dates and documents present

in the plays, we have come as a community of Canadians, to a greater emotional and intellectual understanding of the personal, social, political and religious factors that lie behind a much misunderstood incident in our common Canadian history, and thus learnt something about ourselves as a culture.

On yet a third level, by being sensitive to the use of child's games and toys, and letting ourselves imaginatively assume - again in creative drama fashion - the various viewpoints and perspectives of the Donnellys and their neighbours, we can come not only to a greater intellectual understanding of the mechanics behind inter-social relationships, but a vicarious experiencing of both the depths of deception, cowardice and destruction the human soul is capable of as well as the heights of courage, strength and integrity.

Finally, by being aware of the many levels of reality an object or person can have, and giving in fully to the imaginative, associative, emotional level of thought the child-play style of *The Donnellys* uses, we can fully touch the mythic level of the play as well. We are once more, a primitive community of men tying our human lives to the eternal natural cycles of the seasons and the day; through participating in the sacrificial ritual of the Earth or Nature God - the Barleycorn - we have once more opened the way for the

coming of a new spring, a new day, a new spirit of growth, which, like the triumphant field of grain which closes the trilogy, is at once the same and yet different from the first one. Like Owen, we may not be able to unthread a story already woven, but, building on our own creative imagination and knowledge of self and culture developed through "dreaming out" the Donnelly story, we may yet be able to weave a new, positive "story" for ourselves out of the loose ends of the old ones.

And in the plays of the late seventies, Reaney was to turn this possibility into a serious goal: the changing not just of actors or an audience but of the whole of Canada into a nation of psychic Children prepared to imaginatively "dream out" a redemptive new society and future for themselves.

Footnotes - Part Three: The Donnelly Trilogy

[1]James Reaney, *Ignoramus* in *Apple Butter and Other Plays For Children* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973) p. 151.

[2]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* No. 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 4.

[3]James Reaney, "Souwesto Theatre: A Beginning", *Alumni Gazette* (University of Western Ontario) Vol. 52, No. 3 (Spring, 1976) p. 15.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ronald Huebert, "James Reaney: Poet and Dramatist", *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 13 (Winter, 1977) p. 127.

[6]There was apparently no children's workshop preceding *Handcuffs*, the third part of the trilogy. However, David Ferry suggests this was due more to a shortage of time than a loss of interest in the technique.

[7]David Ferry, Interview (Univ. of Alberta, Nov. 23, 1979.)

[8]James Reaney, "Kids and Crossovers", *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 10 (Spring, 1976) p. 29.

[9]Ronald Huebert, "James Reaney: Poet and Dramatist" *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 13 (Winter, 1977) p. 127.

[10]David Ferry, "Interview" (Univ. of Alberta, Nov. 23, 1979.)

[11]James Reaney, "Kids and Crossovers", *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 10 (Spring, 1976) p. 31.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., p. 28-29.

[14]Ibid., p. 29-30.

[15]Nellie McCaslin, *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom* (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1968) p. 2.

[16]Ibid., p. 5.

[17]David Ferry, "Interview" (Univ. of Alberta, Nov. 23, 1979.)

[18]Ibid.

[19]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 7.

[20]James Reaney, "Kids and Crossovers", *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 10 (Spring, 1976) p. 31.

[21]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play," *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 61.

[22]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney (*Hallowe'en* I) *Black Moss* Series 2, No 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 6.

[23]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1954) p. 49.

[24]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play" *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 61.

[25]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1954) p. 62.

[26]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 61.

[27]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 6.

[28]Ibid., p. 3.

[29]Richard Courtney, *Play, Drama and Thought* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1968) p. 119.

[30]Geraldine Anthony, ed., *Stage Voices* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1978) p. 150.

[31]James Reaney, "Kids and Crossovers", *Canadian Literature Review* No. 10 (Spring, 1976) p. 31.

[32]Herbert Whittaker, "With Tarragon Facing Hard Times, Actress Keeps Her Fingers Crossed", *The Globe and Mail* (December 10, 1974) p. 17.

[33]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic), 1976) p. 56.

[34]Ibid., p. 33.

[35]James Reaney, *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) (Canada: Press Procepic, 1977) p. 133.

[36]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 42.

[37]Ibid., p. 59.

[38]Ibid., p. 66.

[39]Ibid., p. 63.

[40]Ibid., p. 154.

[41]Ibid., p. 143.

[42]Ibid.

[43]James Reaney, *Apple Butter* in *Apple Butter and Other Plays for Children* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973) p. 151.

[44]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 154.

[45]Ibid., p. 131.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., p. 177.

[48]Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[49]Ibid., p. 75.

[50]Ibid., p. 145.

[51]Ibid., p. 77.

[52]Ibid., p. 76.

[53]Ibid., p. 137.

[54]Ibid., p. 153.

[55]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney (*Hallowe'en* No. 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 3.

[56]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 36.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[59]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1954) p. 62.

[60]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 61.

[61]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 67.

[62]Ibid., p. 113.

[63]Ibid., p. 112.

[64]Ibid., pp. 114-115.

[65]Herbert Whittaker, "With Tarragon Facing Hard Times, Actress Keeps Her Fingers Crossed", *The Globe and Mail* (December 10, 1974) p. 17.

[66]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1954) p. 62.

[67]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) pp. 49-50.

[68]Ibid., p. 137.

[69]Ibid., p. 133.

[70]Ibid., p. 154.

[71]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* No. 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 3.

[72]James Reaney, *The St. Nicholas Hotel Wm Donnely Prop. (The Donnellys:* Part Two) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 113.

[73]James Reaney, "Kids and Crossovers", *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 10 (Spring 1976) p. 31.

[74]James Reaney, *The St. Nicholas Hotel Wm Donnelly Prop. (The Donnellys:* Part Two) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) pp. 78-79.

[75]Ibid., p. 93.

[76]Ibid., p. 133.

[77]Ibid., p. 85.

[78]Ibid., p. 41.

[79]Ibid., p. 142.

[80]Ibid., p. 81.

[81]Ibid., p. 152.

[82]James Reaney, "Kids and Crossovers", *Canadian Literature Review* No. 10 (Spring, 1976) p. 31.

[83]James Reaney, *The St. Nicholas Hotel Wm Donnelly Prop. (The Donnellys:* Part Two) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 47.

[84]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[85]Ibid., p. 50.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid., p. 55.

[88]Ibid., p. 54.

[89]Ibid., p. 30.

[90]James Reaney, *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1977) p. 87.

[91]Ibid., p. 24.

[92]James Reaney, *The St. Nicholas Hotel Wm Donnelly Prop. (The Donnellys:* Part Two) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 59.

[93]Ibid., p. 39.

[94]Ibid., p. 112.

[95]Ibid., p. 113.

[96]Ibid., p. 141.

[97]Ibid., p. 138.

[98]Ibid., p. 146.

[99]Ibid., p. 20

[100]Ibid.

[101]Ibid., p. 138.

[102]Ibid., p. 126.

[103]James Reaney, *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1977) p. 47.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid., pp. 140-141.

[106]James Reaney, *Sticks and Stones (The Donnellys:* Part One) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1976) p. 38.

[107]Ibid., p. 116.

[108]James Reaney, *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1977) p. 25.

[109]Ibid., p. 30.

[110]David Ferry, "Interview" (Univ. of Alberta, Nov. 23, 1979.)

[111]James Reaney, *Handcuffs (The Donnellys:* Part Three) (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1977) p. 7.

Part Four: The Socio-Communal Plays

Baldoon (1976), *The Dismissal* (1977), *Wacousta!* (1978), *The Canadian Brothers* (1979), *King Whistle!* (1979)

> I wanted a society where directing a play is not equated with stagemanaging, where the important rehearsal is not the technical rehearsal, where the lighting, costumes, all that money can buy disappear and what we have instead is so much group skill and sense of fun in imagining out things that richness re-appears all over the place for nothing.[1]

I. Introduction

The Donnelly trilogy bequeathed a great deal to the plays of the late seventies. It left them not only with a definitive style welded out of Reaney's various lines of children's drama experimentation, but with a company of professional actors enthusiastically committed to his particular style of "play" theatre. This is evidenced both by the NDWT Company's dominant role in the work-shopping and production of all Reaney's post-*Donnelly* plays to the end of the decade, and Reaney's own comments as regards style:

> There hasn't been a change in my technique since the *Donnellys*. You get something that works, and you keep on doing it.[2]

At the same time, there is every indication that far from being simply variations on the same dramaturgical

theme sounded by *The Donnellys*, the plays of the late seventies form the prelude to yet a new line of dramatic experimentation based again on Reaney's earlier children's work. For, influenced by his positive experiences with the *Donnelly* workshops, and perhaps the subsequent ones with school children on the nationwide tour, Reaney seems intent now on expanding the earlier Listener's Workshop ideal of a redemptive children's theatre for adults into a comprehensive community theatre encompassing all elements of production, scripting, action and even audience participation. As he himself mentions in *Stage Voices:*

> Occasionally, as one summer at Halifax when the children's workshop in the morning and the adult workshop in the afternoon had gone well, I could see the sort of theatre complex I'd like to belong to...[3]

It could be a place where a company of actors, working together with the playwright, "would join themselves to the community they lived in by writing the story of the place they were the intellectual centre of,"[4] an extremely important function in Reaney's eyes since, as he notes in *Hallowe'en 1:*

> ...all "isms" come out or go back into myths or STORIES... Maybe if we get used to seeing our society as being based on a story, we'll wake up and realize we can get a better story.[5]

To aid this realization, the whole community itself would be called to an active imaginative participation in the workshopping and productional process of the story thus written:

> it [the theatre complex] reaches into the community through a regular basis in the summer - daily exercise for the imagination for anyone, young or old who can get there; out of these groups comes the audience and actors for the plays. I think the sometimes reviled Creative Drama can be part of this sweep into the community a regional theatre should take.[6]

Keeping in mind the close resemblance between the Listener's and *Donnelly* Workshops' improvisational activities with children, and those of creative drama, it is particularly fascinating to note that Peter Slade's own intensive work with children led him, at an even earlier date, to very similar conclusions as regards a children's drama for adults. As he notes in *Child Drama:*

> By increasing interest in the method and general outlook which provides the right environment for Child Drama, it is not impossible for a new Folk Drama among adults to arise... Great poetic flow and imaginative creation can sometimes be obtained by this method, and just as Child drama offers equal opportunity to *every Child*, so, by being unafraid and able to join in, simple improvisations by grown-ups can be an expression of a genuine Art of the People.[7]

However, where Slade, still largely pre-occupied with his work with children, has never really developed

this concept of "a genuine Art of the People" beyond a tantalizing suggestion, for Reaney, it has become an earnestly sought goal shaping the overall direction of his post-Donnelly plays to date.

Thus, the main dramaturgical interest in these plays of the late seventies lies less in their basic style, which has been inherited, by Reaney's own admission, largely unchanged from *The Donnellys*, than in the way certain elements of the style and the workshop-productional process alike have been selectively expanded or adapted to reflect the beginning of yet a new development in Reaney's playwrighting career: the creation of a greater theatre of "play" in which the playwright, actors and the community itself come together like psychic Children to co-operatively "dream out" new life and perhaps even society, transforming myths from the raw materials of their common Canadian history and culture.

II. The Plays

In keeping with Reaney's ambition to have the playwright and actors write the story of the communities they are centred in, the five plays of the late seventies all deal with stories or incidents rising out of the history and culture of southwestern Ontario (Souwesto). At the same time, despite their stronger documentary focus, these plays also reflect Reaney's constant emphasis

on metaphorically transforming the material world of place and event instead of merely copying it, whether in life or art. Thus, eschewing naturalism, and drawing upon Reaney's child-like dramaturgy with all its emotional and associative evocativeness, the drama of the late seventies alternates between a romantic (*Baldoon, Wacousta!, The Canadian Brothers*) or social satiric portrayal (*The Dismissal, King Whistle!*) of documentary reality.

Baldoon (1976), a collaboration between James Reaney and Marty Gervais[8] in many ways hearkens back to Reaney's early romantic comedies in its emphasis on extravagant magical happenings, witches who prey upon the spiritually vulnerable, divinely inspired and infernally bedeviled children, and the necessity of establishing the correct spiritual and physical kinship between characters before the action can be resolved. The fact that Reaney apparently conceived *Baldoon* in terms of the sun (the lighter, clearer mood of Act I) interacting with the moon (the darker, more menacing aspect of Act II with its battle between opposing ministers) offers particularly fascinating parallels between this later play and the much earlier *The Sun and the Moon.*

However, there are some important differences. For instance, where the earlier play puts its emphasis on the actual battle between the essences of spiritual good

and evil embodied in Shade and Kingbird, *Baldoon* stresses the fact that we often create our own good or evil out of the way we interpret or act towards our common universe. For, the conflict between Troyer and McGillicudy is less that between a good man and an evil one, than between a positive and a negative interpretation of the same spiritual truths and physical phenomena these men focus their attention on. Similarly, as Troyer insists, even as Christ himself can be seen as either a sorcerer or a savior depending on the observer's spiritual maturity, so is he himself "chust some sort of mirror for you... instead of me already, you see yourself."[9] *Baldoon* thus issues a much more open invitation to an audience to enter imaginatively into the action of the play and construct their own myth or interpretation out of its elements. Moreover, it is an invitation reinforced, as in *The Donnellys*, by the improvisatory "play" style of the work as well as the presentation of a variety of alternative perceptions focusing on the same events or people.

Even more importantly, Reaney takes some pains to stress that the magical and sensational elements of *Baldoon* have a strong factual basis in the documentary realm of our common heritage: that Mary and Dr. Troyer's perception of the world as a place charged with divine and infernal spiritual forces, is indeed a valid and realistic one for ourselves to adopt. As Reaney notes

in the appendix to the play:

> The events portrayed in *Baldoon* are based on fact - on actual occurences that took place in the nineteenth century settlement of Baldoon near Wallaceburg, Ontario[10]... The story has been changed slightly and given a more complicated interpretation[11]...but what we hope to have left is the sense that out of the past comes a world where the laws of atheism, progress and materialism suddenly break down.[12]

As such *Baldoon*, like the gothic romances Reaney admires, presents "a STORY, a story that matters very, very much"[13] in relation to our modern world. For, as Reaney notes:

> there seems to be something about the Industrial Revolution that breeds these Gothic this/that stories: all the rationality of progress only expells Orc, desire, fancy, love, to have it come back one foot higher and ravening for your bank account guts.[14]

And, as a play concerned with the poltergeistic fury actually visited upon a real Ontario farm and community for (at least in Reaney's dramatic interpretation) their betrayal of love, desire and fancy alike, it is not surprising that *Baldoon* not only draws upon actual documentation of the hauntings, but an unprecedented amount of puppetry, to establish the concrete reality of the psychic and supernatural powers at large in the actual town of Baldoon.

Exploiting the puppet's natural capacity for supernatural effects, Reaney firstly expands the model house and church of *Colours* and *The Donnellys* into a puppet stage where all manner of magical, larger-than-life things can be effectively portrayed:

> *Open the model of the Church to reveal model poltergeist events and also have things swinging through the air outside the model with thunderous sounds, a bell ringing distractedly, a pitchpipe squealing as some demon pulls its tail, flashes of light, the model rocking and eventually maybe whirling about.*[15]

Flying stones, dancing rifles and skipping buckets of water are also included in the supernatural action of the play.

Moreover, Reaney turns to puppetry not only to express the supernatural phenomena in *Baldoon*, but the psychic battle underlying the eruption and eventual exorcism of these supernatural phenomena. For, the poetic birds evoked in *Killdeer I* to portray the essence of the characters' nature, take flight in the form of *"three bird puppets on sticks"*, manipulated by the appropriate characters: *"a black goose"* alienated from the flock (Mrs. Pharlan's lonely, alienated soul), *"a white lake-gull"*[18] (Troyer's clear, strong spirit) and *"a hawk"*[19] (McTavish's soul turned fierce and predatory by his grasping materialism). Further, as

Reaney notes:

> The witch and Indian puppets become symbols of something which, at the time of the play, exists only in the minds of the characters. The witch hand puppets which bite, tickle and torment the beleaguered McTavish and McDorman at the outset of Act I are manifestations of those characters' guilt and desperation.[20]

Yet, if McTavish's denial of the positive powers of the human spirit causes them to turn on him with the full fury of their negative aspect, the preoccupation of Baldoon's presbyterian-dominated community with law rather than spirit, only excaburates the poltergeistic problem. And marionettes again are used to express the two-dimensional minds of the strictest and most narrow-minded of the Presbyterian sect (as well as to serve the practical purpose of supplying extra bodies to the important church service in Act II.) Thus, as Reaney concludes, again in his Appendix:

> we have three basic uses of puppets in *Baldoon*: the marionettes represent the type of person, who, through lack of imagination, is puppet-like; the birds which give a supernatural dimension to the characters on stage; and the hand puppets which give substance to the fears and hallucinations of the warped personalities.[21]

In short, by yielding to the imaginative appeal of the puppets onstage, the audience too can enter, like

Troyer, into that enlightened realm of metaphoric essences and truths which shape and give meaning to the documentary world of fact and event in Baldoon. For, "once they [puppets] are given the spark of life through manipulation, others can enter their world through observation."[22]

Yet, Reaney was not content to leave this entry into a saving metaphorical vision of the real world at the level of mere observation. For, *Baldoon*, like *Handcuffs*, may not have risen specifically out of a workshop process. However, even as Reaney more than compensated for this omission in *Handcuffs'* case through a nationwide tour of *The Donnellys*, which featured workshops in public schools across Canada, so did he compensate for the same absence of workshops in *Baldoon* through featuring them on a seven-week provincial tour of the latter play. And even as *The Donnellys* tour "was not to be just another road show, but an exploration of just how much we could cultivate young and old's taste for the creative processes behind the trilogy" which "came from a poet improvising with actors and children",[23] so did the *Baldoon* tour, by having school children devise playlets out of local stories and songs, try to duplicate the creative process behind *Baldoon:* that of a playwright and group of actors creating a life-sustaining myth out of a local story.

The Dismissal (1977), Reaney's next play, resembles *Baldoon* in that it also strongly parallels in its themes

and concerns at least one play from an earlier stage of Reaney's playwriting. For example, *The Dismissal* closely resembles *Three Desks* in that it too concentrates on exposing the iniquities of an educational system so preoccupied with "bells; irrational authorities caught up in things, not words, and the notion of discipline; foreign professors; [and] petty power struggles"[24] that it actually drives out or destroys those who try to achieve its true purposes: the guidance and education of young souls towards a full mental and emotional maturity that may yet allow them to transform the world itself. However, as with *Baldoon*, both Reaney's improvisatory "play" style, and increasing pre-occupation with STORIES, have conspired to create a quite different play out of earlier concerns and materials.

For example, in basing *The Dismissal* on the actual 1895 Student's Strike at the University of Toronto Campus (rather than the fictional incidents and campus of *Three Desks*) Reaney once again drives the centre of the play deeply into the roots of our common Canadian heritage and invites us as members of the Canadian community to participate imaginatively as spectators, as congregation members, as fellow students at mass meetings in this very important STORY from our past. For, by being engulfed in "95's memories and opinions of their city, college, colleagues and activities"[25] we may too ultimately

experience their indignation; and experience it strongly enough perhaps to perceive and work against the same fall of integrity, honesty, words and striving, to the mechanisms of compromise, to the powers of dishonesty, hysteria and sanctimonious hypocrisy in our own time.

As in *Baldoon*, Reaney's improvisatory play style both invites the audience's emotional involvement in the action and facilitates the constant whirl of sound, song, people, documents and events from which we are asked to conjure a whole complex nineteenth century community. However, where *Baldoon* adapts elements of the basic style (and puppetry most noticeably) to sharpen the metaphysical qualities it shares with the early romantic comedies, *The Dismissal* adapts the same basic style to quite another purpose: the synthesization of the rather serious prosaic treatment of modern education in *Three Desks*, and its lighter, more "playful" yet topical treatment in *Ignoramous*, into a mature social satire sharpened by its roots in historical fact and event, yet vitalized by its child-like sense of size, energy and play.

To this purpose, the games used to express negative social patterns of human behaviour in *Sticks and Stones* are given a humorous, satirical twist. An exuberant hockey game, for instance, is used to express the battle

of wits between the critical student newspaper and a disapproving faculty with the paper gleefully scoring hit after hit until the end of term:

> *The game swings into action as Tucker drums out his editorial on a typewriter. A round of checks, harrumphs, and counter-checks. Faculty players topple like dominoes as the students blast their way to the faculty's net.*[26]

Similarly, a lacrosse game represents the flurry of accusations and counter-accusations being hurled between students and staff over the cancellation of a controversial speaker.

In a similar vein, the animal mime used to express real animals in *Wind*, and the dynamics of human character in *St. Nicholas*, is put to a more transparently political use. For the cows that come to drink at the waterhole after Dale has shattered the ice for them are less real cows than political cartoon beasts demonstrating the similar "ice-breaking" function of Dale's writings and protests on young minds similarly "thirsting" for knowledge:

> *the chorus (as cattle) advance to the stage saying a selection of ideas from Dale's journals and letters. As the chorus reaches the stage, Dale disappears in the vapour rising from the waterhole and the darkness of cattle crowding about him.*[27]

However, as in *Baldoon*, the most impressive adaptations again come in the area of puppetry or puppet-like

techniques. For, if *Baldoon* exploits the puppet's natural capacity for portraying fantasy and spiritual abstractions, then *The Dismissal* exploits the puppet's equally natural capacity for satire and caricature.

For instance, hearkening to the subtitle of the play, *(Twisted Beards and Tangled Whiskers)*, the *"white whiskers of Jehovah"* manipulated by *"a robed and hooded figure"*[28] becomes an apt expression of this late Victorian conception of God and conscience which plays so important a role in the play. As such, these puppet whiskers become a sharp, satirical comment on the way Right, and later, King, literally manipulate their consciences and morality to suit their circumstances:

> *George Right enters with shoes and a prayer cushion...; Right kneels to the beard moving freely around him and he around it as if God and Right kept shifting ground... The beard begins to respond with a definite "NO" and is about to drift up, out of reach... Right reaches and forces the whiskers to nod "YES". As he feels the shoes kiss his feet restrained plush ecstasy.*[29]

In this context, the long, false beards worn by many of the older and more rigid of the academic establishment instantly sharpens and conveys their true identity as virtual personifications of this Victorian righteousness and hypocrisy; a righteousness and hypocrisy (expressed once more in puppet fashion) which eventually

confronts and defeats the honesty and integrity of Dale:

> *By this time, the photo brigade of the Executive Council has formed; a cloud of beards faces us as members hold up sticks with photo portraits (placards) of their nineteenth century selves... The placard bearers descend upon Dale, force him to the ground and remove his shoes; they pass through the closing College gates, Dale lying below like dying Gaul.*[30]

Similarly, the portrayal of Fury as a student's effigy which changes into the actual man simultaneously establishes the president's role as a puppet of this Victorian Establishment and as a tyrant as petty and viciously officious as the demons who summon him up at the initiation ceremony.

However, the fascination of *The Dismissal* lies less in its techniques *per se* (for it could be argued that the Bishop's parable of the sooty bird in *Handcuffs*, and the use of a marionette for Corcoran in *St. Nicholas Hotel* display an earlier use of puppetry and animal mime for political comment) than in the way these techniques have been selectively chosen and expanded to produce a play where the satiric, documentary element of Reaney's vision actually takes precedence over the mythic/metaphysical element so dominant in all of Reaney's other adult work. As Gerald Parker suggests in a recent article, King and Tucker both can still be viewed as manifestations of the

typical Reaney "Child", with Tucker finding his way through the jungle of unredeemed materialism by choosing for Dale's "power over words",[31] integrity and the integral life of the spirit, King losing his way in opting for McQuaild with his power over things and the fractional life of bare facts, objects and statistics. However, the presentation of this perennial myth of the Child in the strong historical/communal context of a STORY important to the audience, marks the latter as being the real Children Reaney is concerned about. For, as Tucker suggests, Fury and his cohorts may constitute "the Mind of the province"[32] in nineteenth century Ontario, and as such, they are a part of the province's overall cultural mentality even today. However, impelled by the spur of satire to realize with Tucker that this "Mind" is that of "a madman", the audience, as "the Mind of the province" today will hopefully continue their STORY in a more positive direction.

By contrast, *Wacousta* (1978) and *The Canadian Brothers* (1979) mark yet another swing towards the romantic portrayal of Canadian history and culture. This is not surprising, perhaps, considering the source upon which the plays are based: John Richardson's Gothic historical romance, *Wacousta*, or *The Prophecy* and its sequel *The Canadian Brothers*, or *The Prophecy Fulfilled*. "Together", notes Reaney, "these stories cover the history of Canada,

from 1763 to 1812."[33] As such, they are important STORIES indeed from Reaney's perspective. For, as he notes in "Topless Nightmares":

> When in 1763 the British forts were surprised and taken in the Pontiac Uprising... important crossbeams were laid in our psychological framework and our way of seeing things: only at your peril can you forget ancestral voices like these.[34]

And, even as the world of Caresfoot Court reveals in the large, sensational terms of melodrama, the "psychological framework" shaping human behaviour in Owen's Perth County, so do the melodramatic romances of *Wacousta* and *The Canadian Brothers* expose in sharp, bold form a number of those "important crossbeams" laid in the collective Canadian mind. Wacousta himself is something of "a giant dream figure"[35] emanating from the experience of this collective mind. For, Wacousta's loss of Clara to the cold opportunist de Haldimar is, as Reaney argues, an expression of a similar loss we have felt in one form or another in our own lives: that of a spiritual love and power capable of uniting the soul into "a giant angel self"[36] to the force of a shallow, beguiling materialism. As such, Wacousta, like Byron, Satan, Heathcliff, Thoreau, Achilles and Hamlet is only one, in Reaney's words of:

> a whole nation of souls protesting the way so-called civilization irons out individuality and the passions... What is Wacousta thinking about? Whatever it is it is something that as the story develops the reader sees as having himself lost too: a girl, an Eden, a unity that used to be.[37]

As implied by *Wind*, the first step toward solving the terrors of the modern world, is to be able to dream them out in metaphoric terms that can be then re-organized into a more positive shape; to this extent, Reaney's *Wacousta!* (and one assumes *The Canadian Brothers* as well[38]) functions much like a more historically based Caresfoot Court. However, where the melodramatic action of Caresfoot Court is placed carefully in its proper context by the presence of the documentary world of Perth County and the mythic level of the Winds, *Wacousta!* simply presents the melodrama.

The reason for this extremely important omission may be traced in part to Reaney's increasing confidence in his style and its ability to move audiences to a child-like frame of mind capable of deriving its own spiritual insights and benefits from the melodrama. However, a far more significant reason for omitting both the realms of everyday reality and of overtly mythic essences from the play is that *Wacousta!* is in itself a Caresfoot Court "dreamt out" of an old romance into

a life-sustaining STORY by Reaney, the NDWT Company and sixty to seventy members of the London community. As participant, Catherine O'Grady notes in her overview of the *Wacousta* Workshops (London):

> On September 27, 1976, seventy-three people signed away their Monday nights, including Thanksgiving, for the next eight months. Some of those 73 were never to be heard from again, but at least sixty of us, high school students, university people, teachers, musicians, actors, artists, photographers, dancers, older folk, children and one devoted poet-playwright, returned every week to participate in the play-making process... Reaney and Richardson provided the script; the workshoppers provided the enthusiasm and the courage to step out of 1976 parking lots, fuel shortages, disinfectants and platform shoes into 1763 dirt floored forts, disease, pine-needled forests, bugles and shamans.[39]

In short, the prime purpose of the workshops was "to develop from the collected talents of those assembled and from the novel itself, a play."[40] And to this end, Act I of this "huge, modern, crazy adaptation of the book"[41] was presented in November, 1976, with Act II appearing at the Talbot Theatre in April, 1977. Simultaneously, because, as Reaney notes, "I thought it would be fun to have quite different parts of Ontario joined theatrically in this way,"[42] Wacousta Workshops were also started at Timmons' public school with Reaney commuting there at the begining of October, January and March to supervise the progress of these workshops as

well. From this separate set of Workshops emerged "a scripted premiere of Act One at St. Paul's Public School on the first Thursday of March, 1977,"[43] and six weeks later, after workshops "with actors and friends of the NDWT Company"[44] at the Bathurst Street Theatre in Toronto, a Wacousta Weekend, May 22, 1977. Consisting of a staged public reading of the nineteenth century melodrama version of *Wacousta* that had toured Ontario in the 1850's (Friday), a rough version of the Reaney text (Saturday) and the public school children's version (Sunday), this weekend effectively marked the end of the public *Wacousta* Workshops, and the beginning of the NDWT Company's, which would "eventually redesign the play to their specifications and tour with it across the province."[45]

Again, the actual workshop techniques used in the writing-rehearsal process of *Wacousta!* are essentially derived from earlier phases of Reaney's work. The technique of dividing the workshop participants into small groups which then work on a small part of the whole exercise under the supervision of NDWT actors, is reminiscient of *The Donnelly* workshops:

> Several of the actors who had come from Toronto to work with us (David Ferry, Patsy Ludwick, Jay Bowen) would work independently with small groups on such things as staging Halloway's court martial and execution or choreographing eight women to speak, scream and move simultaneously ... If it happened that we were working

> independently on a particular scene, we would regroup after an hour or so, collect the pieces and start juggling things into order.[46]

Similarly, as in *The Donnelly* and Listener's workshops, the *Wacousta* workshops made significant contributions to the final script; this, both in specific terms of certain techniques arising from improvisatory play (improvised forts, forests of green wool, lacrosse and giants made of several bodies), and in general terms of the energy, and natural designs and patterns of sound and movement flowing out of people engaged in creative play:

> Around "machiolation" we built images and shapes of the Fort: a geometric square shape. Around "dark forest labyrinths", an undulating, circular dance developed - Indian, shamanistic, magical. Sounds become allied to floor patterns as half the group in a square move towards the rest in their circle and blot them out. This was the beginning of the play; on the very last night it was performed in Toronto, in the early spring of 1978, these two shapes were still evident in set design, movement and plot development.[47]

Even the idea of producing plays out of improvisatory workshops with the young and young of heart hearkens back strongly to the intent of the Listener's Workshop.

However, again as in *Baldoon* and *The Dismissal*, the true fascination of *Wacousta!* (or at least the process behind it) lies less in these techniques themselves than in the way they have been combined, shaped

or expanded to reflect Reaney's rapidly developing vision of a community theatre in which actors, playwrights and community members alike come together to produce important STORIES. In the case of *Wacousta!*, this ideal is reflected in a number of ways. One is that while the population of the London and Timmons workshops combined still tended towards the younger age bracket, they still apparently reflected a more homogeneous sample of the community at large than the more child-dominated Listener's and morning *Donnelly* workshops; "we were, indeed," notes O'Grady, "a strange collection of shapes, sizes, ages, experiences and talents."[48] Even more significant, however, is the unprecedented closeness of this community workshop process to the creation of a completed adult script. For, while the morning *Donnelly* workshops and Listener's workshops both contributed much in the way of style, general shape or even specific techniques to *The Donnellys* and *Colours in the Dark* respectively, the end result of these workshop activities tended to be improvisatory scenarios like *Genesis*, based on quite different subject matter from that of the actual adult plays. The *Wacousta* workshops, by contrast, actually produced a recognizable rough draft[49] of *Wacousta!*

However, if the latter workshops, by taking community involvement as far as the rough draft of the play, helped produce the prototype of the Workshop-sensitized audience

Reaney desires to see in his proposed theatre complex, it remained to *King Whistle!* (1979) to carry the community workshop process (and ideal) through to its logical conclusion: a final script and production rising wholely out of the interaction of playwright, actors and community members working together on an important STORY. In portraying the real and often grim STORY of the 1933 General Strike at Statford in the lighter, more humorous vein of satire, song and games, *King Whistle!* in many ways resembles the style and more immediate social concerns of *The Dismissal*. As Reaney notes:

> And so, after six years, I am writing a play about almost contemporary life; about factories, about economic problems, about Marxism and Capitalism!... Except, if what you're imagining is that I was going to put all this material into a realistic play, you have another think coming.... What we were going to do was take the reality of 1933 and, like this film [Gold Diggers of 1933], pour all that sadness and economic puzzle into a form that has tap dances, ballets, songs.[50]

However, in productional and rehearsal concepts, *King Whistle!* hearkens back far more strongly to *Ignoramus*, and that children play's experimentation with getting a whole school working either on or behind stage on subject matter relevant to their studies. And it is, perhaps, highly significant that the opening workshop phase of *King Whistle!* was once more centred around school children and their activities. As Reaney notes:

> As long ago as last February, NDWT actors and myself started a series of workshops at Central Collegiate in Stratford. We visited every classroom, we sent home a questionnaire, we held two workshops with 600 students apiece in the gymnetorium; if you're going to write a play about a community, particularly a Stratford which in 1933 came out on the streets and shouted what it wanted, then you have to persuade the students and teachers to do likewise, to explore the roots of the community in every way possible. Students and local citizens brought in gorgeous material from the interviews they conducted with men and women who took part in the strike; also from the microfilm reader at the library, also from the Perth County Archives superbly organized by a childhood friend of mine, James Anderson.[51]

However, after "a simplified workshop and presentation based on Stratford Present/Stratford Past with 2 school assemblies of 600 each," using "the answers to the questionnaires worked into mime/vocal textures with the Drama Club and with Ron Dodson's Theatre Arts Classes"[52] the Public workshops began.

And Reaney carefully began to expand the earlier *Ignoramus* experiment beyond the classroom and into the whole community of Stratford. From this second series of workshops which reached out to include the Stratford Little Theatre and Children's theatre, came a rough draft in the spring of 1979: "four collages built of all the work so far: *Prelude, Politicians, Stories* and *Stratford is a Paper Street.*"[53]

A third series of intensive workshops followed during the summer, leading to the writing of a second

draft, the writing of ten of the songs by a Grade Twelve student, and the training of fourteen of the best students available with "dance, voice and tap and movement lessons" to "unfold young limbs into those professional actor charismatics."[54]

Finally, in September, armed with his fourteen Workshop-trained actors, several members of the NDWT company and a third script built upon all the earlier community based research, stories and workshopping, Reaney was finally ready to cast the play and start the last series of workshop-rehearsals leading to the actual production of *King Whistle!* He notes:

> 85 showed up for auditions - we offered them all parts. The first read-through with Jim Storms at the piano was Colossus of Rhodes time, but leading the 85 - eventually settling down to 65 - we had 14 trained voices and tappers, candles of poise and know-how.[55]

Thus, when *King Whistle!* premiered in November of 1979, it was as close a realization of Reaney's ultimate goal of creating a community theatre, as the seventies was to present. Built by a local playwright out of nearly a year of improvisational workshops extending to all segments of the community, it featured well over a 100 members of the Stratford community actually on stage. Moreover, in addition to the 66 "cast" characters, the 20 or more "unnamed" small children, 53 people in the Pit,

Striker's and Militia bands, and unnumbered Cadets of Perth County and Royal Canadian Cadets playing the army, at least another 68 Stratford citizens were working on the production behind the scenes; and the number of those involved shoots even higher when one realizes that Set decoration was done in part by "the Art Classes in Room 128" and snow provided by "Mr. Dodson's English 251 and 351 classes."[56] Finally, the audience was composed of Stratford citizens who, sensitized by the improvisatory style of the play, their own personal memories or participation in the earlier *Whistle* workshops, had also come to help "dream out" an important STORY with their fellow citizens both on and behind stage: a redemptive myth of themselves as a community capable of resisting the materialistic tyranny of both Marxism and Capitalism in favour of a more humane and spiritually constructive route between both "isms".

Written in 1979, *King Whistle!* effectively closes Reaney's second decade of playwriting. In review, it is possible to see that the story of Reaney's rapidly evolving and changing dramaturgy to date is, in essence, that of Reaney's constant search and striving for a dramatic form, philosophy and method suited to the full dramatic expression of his Child-centered vision.

To recapitulate, Reaney's first experiments with moving this latter vision to the stage were somewhat

hampered by his use of a static set and a linear plotline that often did not allow the audience or even the actors to recognize themselves as being in a child's imaginative world of play and mataphorically perceived realities. From Reaney's intensive experimentation with puppetry, children's theatre and creative drama-like workshops in the sixties, however, came an explosion of important developments: (1) the rapid development of a fluid, visually and aurally evocative "play" style which both broke away from the physical limitations posed by the linear plotline and static set, and, more importantly, helped adjust the audience's and actors' minds to the correct imaginative, associative focus of the imaginative child; (2) a stronger emphasis on the personal, redemptive powers of the child's imagination, an emphasis particularly apparent in Reaney's two "thesis" plays, *Listen to the Wind* and *Colours in the Dark*, which strongly invited the audience and actors to enter imaginatively into the experience of the child-protagonist reaching spiritual salvation through the powers of creative play and thought; and (3) a growing interest on Reaney's part in applying his Child-centred myth to real life through improvisatory workshops designed to guide people back to the Child-within, and through that a fresh and redemptive way of viewing themselves and their world.

From *The Donnellys* and the workshops closely associated with them came in turn: (1) a general sense of human patterns of movement and play; (2) a refinement and sophistication of the three various lines of children's theatre experimentation into a distinctive "play" style continued throughout the seventies; (3) a demand on the audience, as imaginative Children to enter imaginatively into the real world of their own cultural past and construct their own life-sustaining myths out of its elements, and (4) the finding and training of a company of actors willing to perform this style in the proper spirit of child-like energy, imagination and play.

Finally, in the plays of the late seventies, Reaney appears to be moving towards a comprehensive concept of theatre, building on his successful experiments with a style, a company and a history of public workshops all based on the child-like powers of play, myth and metaphor.

His hope to create a theatre complex where actors, playwright and the members of the community itself come together to play or "dream out", like psychic Children, a new redemptive vision of themselves out of STORIES from their common culture and past is an ambition still strongly with Reaney as he moves into the eighties. Certainly, his projected list of activities for the coming year include writing plays designed to encourage strong community involvement. As he notes:

> Looming horrors are a memorial show about the Donnellys for the massacre centenary; a play written for TNT - old amateur actors - who need new material to take to nursing homes; a possible commission from the Urban League here; people in Stratford want me to do another original musical with them in about a year's time.[57]

However, even this form of "play" theatre may be but a smaller model of the even greater one that Reaney has begun to envision in his writings. And it is, perhaps, only appropriate to allow Reaney himself the last word as to where he would like to guide his consummately Childish vision and dramaturgy as he moves confidently into the eighties and his third decade of playwrighting:

> Well, if you are going to ask questions of a playwright, I think the best place to close is to get him talking about actual theatres he's been in. If they've had any power over him it just might be that what he is trying to do is help build a society where this fact keeps repeating itself over and over again until our whole nation loses its stiffness and becomes a sort of theatre. Not the sort of theatre it is now where Technology (descended from experiments with organ pipes and mechanical clocks and fountains) creates even more terrifying and sinister spectacles; no, but a place where we ourselves, with just our bodies and the simplest of props (albeit in abundance) available to everyone create a civilization where it finally seems true that to be wise is to know how to play.[58]

Footnotes - Part Four: The Socio-Communal Plays

[1]James Reaney, "Ten Years at Play", *Canadian Literature* No. 41 (Summer, 1969) p. 48.

[2]Gerald Parker, "The Integral versus the Fractional: Reaney's *The Dismissal*", *Brick* 7 (Fall, 1979) p. 21.

[3]Geraldine Anthony ed., *Stage Voices* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1978) p. 157.

[4]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" *(Hallow'en* No. 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 8.

[5]Ibid., p. 4.

[6]Geraldine Anthony ed., *Stage Voices* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1978) p. 158.

[7]Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1954) p. 127.

[8]Actor Frank C. Turner, who played Dr. Troyer in the first production of *Baldoon*, commented that the script was produced out of a series of drafts written alternatively by both Gervais and Reaney. One author worked on the first draft and the other on the second with both working together on the third; the fourth and fifth draft were once more written separately by the authors with collaboration once more on the sixth and final draft which was then presented to the actors. Turner further commented that while it was difficult to assess each man's specific contribution to *Baldoon*, he believed that the thematic "confession" poem and a good portion of the chorus work could be ascribed to Gervais.

[9]James Reaney and C.H. Gervais, *Baldoon* (Erin: The Porcupine's Quill, Inc., 1976) p. 102.

[10]Ibid., p. 105.

[11]Ibid., p. 109.

[12]Ibid., p. 118.

[13]James Reaney, "A Letter From James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* No. 1), *Black Moss* Series 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1976) p. 8.

[14]James Reaney, "Topless Nightmares being a dialogue with himself by James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* No. 2) (Fall, 1976) p. 7.

[15]James Reaney and C.H. Gervais, *Baldoon* (Erin: The Porcupine's Quill Inc., 1976) p. 74.

[16]Ibid., p. 3.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 113.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 114.

[23]James Reaney, *14 Barrels From Sea to Sea* (Erin Press Porcepic, 1977) p. 35.

[24]James Reaney, *The Dismissal* (Canada: Press Porcepic, 1978) p. 5.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 32.

[27]Ibid., p. 39.

[28]Ibid., p. 19.

[29]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[30]Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[31]Ibid., p. 23.

[32]Ibid.

[33]James Reaney, *Wacousta!* (Canada: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1979) p. 6.

[34]James Reaney, "Topless Nightmares being a dialogue with himself by James Reaney" (*Hallowe'en* No. 2) (Fall, 1976) p. 2.

[35]Ibid., p. 3.

[36]Ibid., p. 6.

[37]Ibid., p. 3.

[38]There is alas, viritually no ready information on the *The Canadian Brothers* let alone a published script. David Ferry, however, mentions that there was, as with *Wacousta!*, at least a workshop presentation of *Brothers*, assumedly created out of public workshops again. And Reaney's own word on the subject (Letter, January 22, 1980) is that *The Canadian Brothers* was produced in the "late fall and early winter of 1979 at Western."

[39]James Reaney, *Wacousta!* (Canada: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1979) p. 109.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid. p. 8.

[42]Ibid., p. 157.

[43]Ibid., p. 158.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 110.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., p. 116.

[48]Ibid., p. 107.

[49]The workshop copy of the script is considerably more melodramatic than the finished script, and contains more improvisatory sequences in the action. Yet, in terms of basic storylines, techniques, and even scenes, it is still very much a recognizable rough draft of the considerably more polished and refined professional version.

[50]James Reaney, *King Whistle!* in *Brick* No. 8 (Winter, 1980) pp. 50-51.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., p. 55.

[53]Ibid., p. 57.

[54]Ibid., p. 60.

[55]Ibid., p. 61.

[56]Ibid., p. 87.

[57]James Reaney, Personal letter (January 22, 1980).

[58]Geraldine Anthony, ed., *Stage Voices* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1978) p. 160.

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